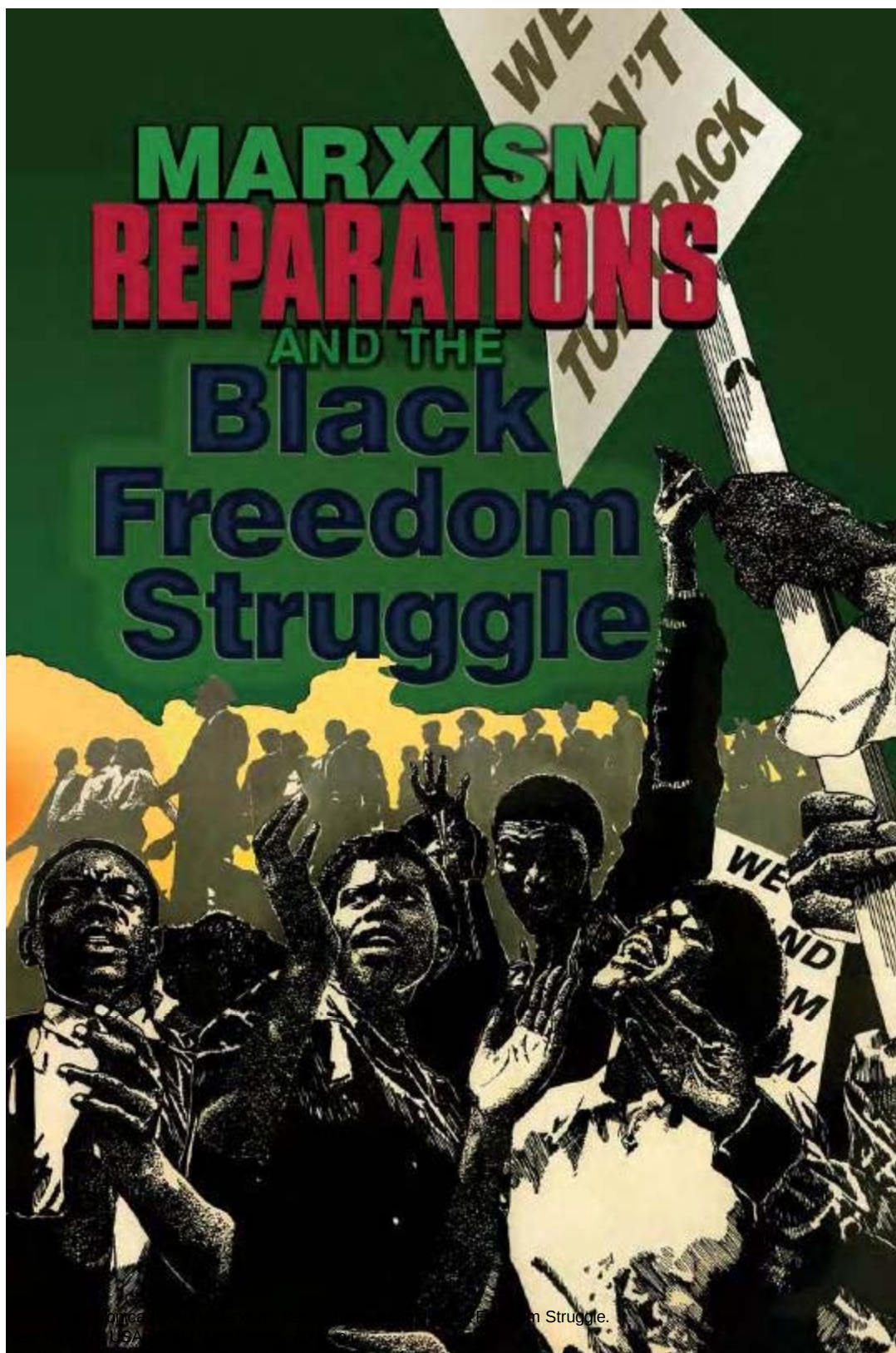




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MARXISM, REPARATIONS AND THE Black Freedom Struggle



From the pages of Workers World

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Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle

From the pages of Workers World

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Pat Chin in Haiti;
Sam Marcy in
front of U.N.,
1960.

DEDICATION

In Loving Tribute

This book is dedicated to the memory of Patricia "Pat" Chin, a Jamaican-born leader of Workers World Party, who passed away on May 16, 2005, and Sam Marcy, chairperson and founding member of Workers World Party, who passed away on Feb. 1, 1998.



Their indomitable fighting spirit and political contributions to the class struggle will forever shine a bright light on what it will take to liberate all of the workers and oppressed from the crimes against humanity perpetuated under capitalism and imperialism.

With deep revolutionary love and respect,

Monica Moorehead,

editor of

"Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle"

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Southern family migrates north to Chicago.

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"America owes to my people some of the dividends
.... She can afford to pay, and she must pay.
I shall make them understand that there is a debt
to the Negro people which they can never repay.
At least, then, they must make amends."

—Sojourner Truth

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction: Black liberation & the working-class struggle

Racism, national oppression and the right to self-determination	
Larry Holmes July 13, 2002	1
The struggle for socialism is key	
Monica Moorehead March 4, 2004	8
Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice!	
Saladin Muhammad Jan. 25, 2007	10
Building revolutionary consciousness	
Tony Van Der Meer May 13, 2006	17

II. The material basis for reparations in the U.S.

Reparations and Black liberation	
Monica Moorehead June 6, 2002	19
Reparations now! Growing movement demands compensation for centuries of slavery	
WWP statement Aug. 22, 2002	22
Wachovia admits slave trade profits	
Betsey Piette June 10, 2005	25
Why reparations? A look inside U.S. prisons	
Greg Butterfield Aug. 22, 2002	26
Reparations for African Americans	
Pam Parker Dec. 21, 2000	29
Black farmers demand justice	
Monica Moorehead July 18, 2002	30
Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of slavery, sharecropping and segregation	
Consuela Lee Aug. 22, 2002	32
From Bakke to Bush Affirmative action comes under fire	
Monica Moorehead Feb. 6, 2003	34

III. Brief overview of racist oppression & heroic resistance

Slavery and debt Editorial Feb. 13, 2005	39
Black Reconstruction: The unfinished revolution	
Minnie Bruce Pratt Aug. 22 & Aug 29, 2002	41
1906 Atlanta 'Race Riot' was a massacre	
Dianne Mathiowetz Oct. 2, 2006—web version	49
The 1921 Tulsa massacre	
Monica Moorehead June 10, 1999	53

Moorehead, Monica (Editor). Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle.

New York, NY, USA: World View Forum, 2007. p viii.

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1921 racist terror in Tulsa: Black survivors demand reparations	
Monica Moorehead March 16, 2005	56
50th anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education: 'The stony road we trod'	
Dorothea Peacock May 20, 2004	57
Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion	
John Parker August 20, 2005	59
African Americans in the military: The struggle against racism & war	
Pat Chin Oct. 31, 2002	62
iv. What Hurricane Katrina exposed to the world	
Black leaders link issues to building united front	Oct. 25, 2005
	65
Racism and poverty in the Delta	
Larry Hales Sept. 10, 2005	69
Who are the real looters?	
LeiLani Dowell Sept. 5, 2005	72
'21st century slave ship'	
Clarence Thomas and Chris Silvera Sept. 19, 2005	74
'Like a bomb was dropped in the region'	
Teresa Gutierrez Sept. 15, 2005	79
Katrina survivors deserve reparations	
Monica Moorehead Oct. 13, 2005—Web version	83
v. Africa: A battleground against colonialism & for sovereignty	
Africa's debt crisis calls for reparations	
Monica Moorehead July 15, 2005	85
Africa struggles to control its oil	
Donatien Bukuba Dec. 9, 2004	87
Congo, Africa & imperialism	Editorial Oct. 30, 2003
	89
Greetings to the 3rd UN World Conference Against Racism	
Mumia Abu-Jamal Aug. 31, 2001	90
Herero people demand reparations from Germany	
Monica Moorehead August 26, 2004	92
LGBT Pride, Africa and the AIDS crisis	
Minnie Bruce Pratt June 6, 2005	93
Capitalist greed behind aborted coup in Africa	
Monica Moorehead March 25, 2004	95
Moorehead at Harlem forum on Zimbabwe: 'U.S. trying to re-enslave Africa'	
Monica Moorehead June 22, 2003	97
The driving force behind the land seizures	
Monica Moorehead Aug. 29, 2002	100
Africa needs reparations, not occupation and sanctions	
Deirdre Griswold Sept. 23, 2005	102

Moorehead, Monica (Editor). Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle.

New York, NY, USA: World View Forum, 2007. p ix.

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The U.S. role in Darfur, Sudan	
Sara Flounders June 3, 2006	103
What's at stake in the Horn of Africa	
Monica Moorehead Jan. 7, 2007	109
vi. Justice for the Caribbean	
Causes of turmoil in Jamaica Parts 1, 2, 3	
Pat Chin Oct. 4, 11, & 18, 2001	113
Haiti needs reparations, not sanctions	
Pat Chin July 17, 2003	122
vii. A salute to women revolutionaries	
Thinking about sisters in the struggle	
Gloria Verdieu March 5, 2005	125
Harriet Tubman: woman warrior	
Mumia Abu-Jamal July 18, 2002	128
Nigerian women take over ChevronTexaco	
Monica Moorehead Aug. 1, 2002	130
Nigerian women's takeover ends in victory	
Monica Moorehead Aug. 8, 2002	132
Detroit Resolution Supports Freedom Fighter Assata Shakur	
August 16, 2005	133
viii. Why fight-back is inevitable	
Black youth: repression and resistance	
LeiLani Dowell Feb. 2, 2006	135
'Racial profiling aims to divide workers'	
Julius Dykes Sept. 16, 2000	138
AIDS & poverty Editorial Dec 13, 2001	141
U.S. capitalism puts oppressed nations and the poor behind bars	
Monica Moorehead August 2000	142
ix. Black labor & class solidarity	
Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery	
Sam Marcy From High Tech, Low Pay 1986	155
Detroit's revolutionary history: Ex-students linked with Black workers	
Debbie Johnson & Jerry Goldberg June 28, 2001	179
Black coal miners: A long legacy of struggle	
Stephen Millies Jan. 29, 2006	182
Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights	
Imani Henry June 1, 2006	184
Black labor and the fight for reparations	
Bill Cecil Aug. 1, 2002	188
The May Day uprising of 2006	
Larry Holmes May 9, 2006	191

Moorehead, Monica (Editor). Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle.

New York, NY, USA: World View Forum, 2007. p x.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Black Liberation & the Working-Class Struggle



1199 SEIU
union members
rally in New York.

Racism, national oppression & the right to self-determination



By Larry Holmes

*From remarks made during a political discussion
in New York on July 13, 2002*

There is no place on the planet where revolutionaries and communists are not challenged by the politics of national oppression and what must be done to overcome obstacles to win unity on this question.

So much has been written, so much has been debated, so much theory has been applied to it, both rightly and wrongly, and there is such a rich history of practice both here and around the world. We really

don't want to rank issues in order of their importance to revolutionaries in the struggle for socialism, but let me tell you, this one is way up there.

Read everything you can get your hands on. Not just what Lenin wrote—though he made incredible, monumental contributions on this question. Lenin's contributions turned the communist movement around on the national question, awakened the communist movement. Read Sam Marcy, the founder of Workers World Party and chairperson until his death five years ago. He had an understanding of the nation-

al question here and around the world unsurpassed by anyone that we are aware of. If you have sensed or experienced good things about what the Party does in relationship to oppressed nationalities in this country, it is because of his deep understanding of it. It is putting theory into practice.

Our understanding of the national question and of self-determination and racism, which is a by-product of national oppression, has everything to do with understanding what we as revolutionaries have to do to maximize solidarity and minimize divisions within the working class. This is essential both for the political development of the working class, especially the vanguard, and for our progress and the success of our struggle for socialist revolution.

When we talk about proletarian internationalism or working-class internationalism, we are talking about “workers of the world unite.” It shouldn’t be an empty slogan. When it is written across a newspaper or on a banner, workers and progressives relate to it—and you don’t see it enough here and elsewhere. But what is more important is what we do to make the slogan a reality. And that has everything to do with understanding the workers in your country first and foremost, the country you reside in, their differences or the things that divide them socially and economically, who is more privileged or less privileged, inequality and of course nationality.

With respect to this and also to understanding national oppression on a world level, Lenin made a very important contribution by modifying the slogan “workers of the world unite.” After a discussion that he opened up, that slogan was changed to “workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite,” to show that this was the prescription for working-class internationalism in the imperialist era.

Lenin did his revolutionary political work at a time, a century ago, when imperialism was already very advanced, rapidly sending out capitalists, missionaries and especially armies to colonize as much of the world as it could. This meant not exclusively but generally what we have come to call the “Third World”—which means mostly Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and the Caribbean.

Communists and national liberation movements

This process gave rise to national liberation movements for people to free themselves from colonization. And the question was posed very starkly: What is the communist view of this? Is this part of the class struggle? Are we interested in this at all? Or is it a diversion?

It was controversial because the national liberation movements were not purely class struggles, inasmuch as some of the participants were bourgeois elements in colonies whose hope was (1) winning nominal independence and (2) to become the ruling bourgeoisie in their country to oppress the workers and peasants. If there was any basis of unity with them it was very limited because in a larger, inevitable sense they were our class enemies.

After much debate, the movement under Lenin’s leadership concluded that bour-

geois elements in the national liberation movement were a problem, and wherever possible we should wage a class struggle against them within the national liberation movement. But that should not for one second limit us from unconditionally supporting the national liberation movements to free the colonies.

Not only should we support the liberation movements but if we want to prevail, if we want to influence oppressed people, we have to become the champions of the liberation of oppressed people, in deed as well as word.

We are not just talking about colonies with boundaries—you know there are colonies which are identifiable because they have distinct boundaries and are hundreds or thousands of miles away: Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines, etc. But there are also people who are colonized within the boundaries of this country—Native people, Latino people, Arab people, Asian people and Black people. You can go country by country and talk about all of this.

Lenin said we need to become the force in the struggle that everyone who is interested in the liberation of oppressed people looks to. This is the foundation of our attitude toward the struggle against racism and all inequality in society, especially in the working class, including the oppression of women and of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people. National oppression is rooted in imperialism, it flows from it. This is why we give special attention to it, think about the seriousness of it and come up with an approach to it.

One of Lenin's biggest contributions along these lines was understanding that while solidarity is a two-way street, it is a little different when we talk about the workers of an oppressing nation and the oppressed. If solidarity is going to be effective and successful, if it is going to achieve the desired results, then it is not for the oppressed people to find a way to appeal to the workers of the oppressor nation. It is not for them to find some compromise or some basis upon which they can explain their plight and their struggle to Europeans or whites in this country. No, it is up to the workers in the oppressor nation—especially the vanguard elements—to take the first big, decisive step and support the struggle of the oppressed.



Sam Marcy and Eddie Oquendo in the 1960s.

Are backward workers the problem?

The problem is not backward, ignorant workers. You'll come across them everywhere, at all points in history and in all parts of the globe. Some of them you will never win. Some of them will always be with the bourgeois government and the military, waving the flag.

But many of them, and certainly a decisive number when the struggle is on, will learn very quickly. If you have been involved in a strike or other significant struggle, small, medium or large, where workers of both oppressed and oppressor nations work together, you will have witnessed for yourself how after a while the workers of the oppressor nation understand more about the situation of workers in the oppressed na-

tion, how they even talk differently after a month or three months or six months.

I think about the strike of the air-traffic controllers 21 years ago that unfortunately ended in defeat. These were very privileged, mostly white workers who at that time made \$30,000 or \$35,000 a year, which at the time was like making \$150,000 per year today. They didn't want to hear anything about issues like Leonard Peltier or racism or Puerto Rico—but after a while they were talking about these things and you could see how the struggle itself educated workers. There is really no substitute for it.

The backwardness of the workers is not the problem. The problem is the leadership in the progressive movement and the struggle between different political currents within the movement. There are forces who have influence in the working-class



movement that either are not revolutionary and do not share our objectives or don't care about the liberation movements and are just concerned about economic struggles. They don't want to talk about the Philippines, Puerto Rico, the Congo, Venezuela, Cuba, etc.

It takes courage to do what is necessary to effect solidarity. It means you have to take on the bourgeoisie and bourgeois public opinion. It means you have to go against the grain. This is something our comrades, especially those with experience, can tell you. Some of them have been at union meetings

or rallies and talked about a struggle that is not popular or that the bourgeois media vilifies. Maybe they took some boos and maybe they were dis-invited from the next rally. Maybe they were red-baited or lost their position as delegate or official in a union. But they still defend the oppressed.

In many ways our problem reduces itself to a struggle between the forces vying for political influence within the working-class movement. That is where we have to assert ourselves, and prevail more often than not, so that we hold our own with those who don't share our objectives, no matter what they call themselves.

Sam Marcy wrote a tremendous article 43 years ago. A lot has happened since, but in my opinion, it not only says a lot about the Black struggle and Marcy's understanding of how central the Black struggle is to the revolution in this country, but the lessons that he draws in a very thoughtful way are applicable for just about every oppressed people and every national liberation movement regardless of its circumstance or place.

The article is called "A Turning Point in History: A Letter to a Fighter in the Deep South." This article was directed not only to the masses in popular language, but it was mainly directed to progressives, to revolutionaries, to aspiring revolutionaries at a pivotal time in the civil-rights struggle.

Marcy said: Don't let conservative ideas and conservative forces and tendencies in the working-class movement mess you up and stop you from doing what you need to do in support of the liberation struggle in this country. He pointed out how, starting after the Civil War and the end of chattel slavery, the working-class movement, even

its vanguard, made very important mistakes and missed opportunities with respect to the Black struggle.

He began by talking about the early Marxists. There were a handful who read Marx and were associated with the First International in the 1870s and played a role in the formation of the early labor movement in this country, including the struggle for the eight-hour day. They were in Chicago and New York and the Northern industrial cities, but by and large, with few exceptions, they did not pay much attention to the emerging Black proletariat, millions of whom had migrated from semi-slavery conditions in the South.

WWP steeled in the struggle

Looking back on the early work of Workers World Party, what it emphasized, what it did in sending cadres south to participate in the self-defense efforts of Black people in Louisiana and Alabama, it became clear around the time that I came into the Party in the early 1970s that WWP had subordinated many aspects of its own development to supporting the Black struggle.

When we met with the Black Panthers, we asked them: What can we do to help your struggle against the repressive state? We met with all the other forces—the Puerto Rican movement, the Chicano movement and all the others. We were so busy doing what we could to support them, as well as fighting against the imperialist war in Vietnam—that we didn't have the time to form internal organizations to raise money to do what a Party has to do to develop itself. And one might say you're going to have to make up for that, you're going to have to pay for that—and we have made up for that.

But what we gained as a result of this act of anti-racist solidarity—and this is why it was not a mistake—was that it steeled the Party on this question. It steeled the Party on the question of supporting the national liberation struggles, fighting national oppression, fighting racism. And that is why a lot of well-meaning people do not understand this question as thoroughly and as deeply as the Party does.

History will make our job easier—the job of merging the class struggle and the struggle against national oppression. Over time, ironically, imperialism has the effect of creating the social conditions that give rise to the revolution. We can see this by looking at the character of the multinational working class in this country and around the world.

What has the development of imperialism over the last generation done? The desperate search for cheaper and cheaper sources of labor fueled by technology has brought the oppressed, who in another time were isolated either geographically or based on other circumstances, into the working class by the tens of millions. It is true here and it is true everywhere.

At the same time imperialism has tended to level the living standards of the entire working class, impoverishing many workers. Some white workers here or in Europe who at some point were more privileged are finding that they are now less privileged.



**Fred Hampton,
martyred Panther
leader.**

As they look around they see their living conditions, their standard of living, getting closer and closer to their class sisters and brothers in Asia, in Africa, etc. This is an uneven process and of course there is still tremendous inequality.

But you can see the point that I am making. This development tends to help us. At a certain point the struggles tend to merge naturally. Sometimes you can't see it, especially if it is a quiet period and there is very little struggle and there is bad leadership in the working-class movement. But once the struggle breaks out you see right away that this is different from what was imagined or thought possible 30 years ago. We have begun to see this and we will see more.

But having said that we also have to talk about other problems. The growth of imperialism also means the deepening of racism and inequality. Racism remains rampant, almost out of control. And now, just like in Lenin's time, imperialism still colonizes most of the people on the planet and is trying to re-colonize other people—that is what the war drive is all about.

U.S. war drive and self-determination

This is what we have been fighting in recent months and will be fighting even more vociferously as the imperialists prepare their plans for war on Iraq. They are using 9/11 to whip up racism and create a political climate for what they want to do. It shows you that the struggle for self-determination is not antiquated, it is not something relegated to history, but is as relevant and alive today as it has ever been.

When we fight to stop the imperialist war on Iraq, we are fighting for the Iraqi people's right to determine their own destiny. And it is a struggle that is riddled with contradictions. We don't support the government in Iraq. It has many interesting, complex characteristics, bourgeois nationalism, an interesting history—but fundamentally, it is a reactionary bourgeois regime. They killed a lot of communists and retarded the development of the working-class movement.



But that is not an obstacle to us understanding that imperialism wants to deprive the people of Iraq of their right to determine their own destiny. It has nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction and all the other reasons they will give the masses for wanting to invade Baghdad.

Doesn't Cuba have a right to self-determination? It is a positive example—we wholly support that government. It's an oasis in the fight for socialism. Should we rely on the Cuban Revolution solely to inspire us or are we going to do everything that we can to inspire them? We are still struggling in modern circumstances to support oppressed peoples' right to self-determination.

We have extra challenges that have come about as a result of some temporary historical setbacks that we will fight and recover from—believe that. The defeat of the Soviet Union is a big problem. Before its defeat the USSR, with all its problems, was

nevertheless a bulwark of support for the national liberation movements. In relationship to the world struggle, the presence of the Soviet Union leveled the playing field a little bit. It made it easier for oppressed people. They had a powerful force to lean on, politically as well as for resources and military aid. The very existence of a socialist camp with hundreds of millions of people was somewhat of a brake on imperialism. That brake no longer exists and this is a big part of our problem.

In addition to that, another consequence of that setback is that our Marxist ideas are on the defensive. It is a huge irony because the masses need to embrace Marxist ideas more than ever—that is, the idea of socialism and what is closely associated with it, solidarity and unity itself. We are now plagued with bourgeois ideas that do everything from preach the most reactionary attributes of religion to undermine unity. These ideas include: sink or swim, only the strongest survive, to hell with the poor, it is noble and right to be rich, etc.



This is the stench that has hovered like a gray cloud over the world for too long—10, 20 years. I think there is a strong wind of struggle that is going to blow it away and it's beginning now. If you look beneath the so-called corporate scandals and see that underneath the capitalist economic crisis is bubbling over, this is where the real potential lies. This is what we are preparing for, along with the struggle against Bush's war.

As revolutionaries understanding the national question and the relationship between the class struggle and the struggle against national oppression, we have to revive solidarity and unity just as we revive the ideas, the notion and the goal of socialism. If we don't do this, we won't revive the revolutionary movement.

It is more important that we understand this here more than anywhere else. Why? Because the U.S. has become what they used to call czarist Russia—the prisonhouse of nations. It has been that way for a long time and now in 2002 it is that to the 25th power. So if anybody is going to understand the national question—if anyone is going to be sensitized to it—if anybody is going to understand the ins and outs of it, who we have to talk to and the correct tactical approach—it's got to be us. There is so much in our hands.

For decades everyone has looked to the Third World. Most of the story of the 20th century was looking to our sisters and brothers in China, Cuba, the Soviet Union, Vietnam and Africa to make the revolution. But what about us in the West?

We are revolutionaries, meaning that we have big ideas and big ambitions. Our ambitions are revolutionary by definition. We have to strive as a vanguard to influence our class here to at the very least replace what the Soviet Union once was to the world. It is time for workers in the big imperialist countries, especially in this country, to shoulder their share of the burden of the world struggle.

This is the epoch that those of us in the big imperialist centers have to be prepared for, that we have given all of our lives toward—worldwide socialist revolution. ♣

National oppression & the struggle for socialism

By Monica Moorehead

From remarks at Workers World Party Black History Month forum in New York on Feb. 20, 2004

As a Black person growing up in the South during the 1950s, I experienced a "separate but equal" society: racist segregation.

As a 12-year-old living in Talladega, Ala., I witnessed a white male cop going into a white-only women's bathroom to "escort" my mother out.

In 1967, I attended a majority-white high school in Virginia whose fight song happened to be the pro-slavery anthem "Dixie."

I began to seriously question whether all white people were born racist.

My questions on the origins of racism began to be answered once I met the Prisoners Solidarity Committee, a mass unit of Workers World Party. My introduction to the Party would eventually begin my journey of helping to put my personal experiences within a worldwide political context.

Marxism is the only scientific tool and guide for understanding revolutionary theory and for carrying out revolutionary action. The Party opened my eyes to the fact that racism is an ideology rooted in the economic system of capitalism, and perpetuates class divisions in order to maximize profits.

Racist ideas do not originate with white workers, who are more susceptible to these poisonous ideas; they come from a predominantly white ruling class that relies on racism, sexism and homophobia to maintain the status quo.

National oppression, an outgrowth of imperialism, confirms that the vast majority of Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian and Arab peoples are not just victims of institutionalized racism, but are members of oppressed nations that are super-exploited and super-oppressed for who they are, where they live and where they come from. These factors and others help to define their relationship to capitalism and imperialism.

Understanding the roots of national oppression means understanding that there are oppressed nations and a white oppressor nation. Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution that led to the birth of the Soviet Union, helped to theoretically define the colonial question at a time when national liberation movements began erupting in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and elsewhere against the onslaught of imperialist plunder and exploitation.

Many of these liberation movements have been led by nationalists who adhere to diverse ideologies, some of them bourgeois and some of them more anti-imperialist, and then there are the movements lead by socialists and communists. Even though



Photo: Roberto Merced

we have more of a political affinity for those nationalists who consider themselves revolutionary Marxists, in general we defend the leadership of genuine national liberation movements and those leaders of oppressed countries seeking some degree of independence and sovereignty. We take this principled position because imperialism has been the biggest obstacle in putting the brake on independent economic and social development for the poorer countries.

The struggle for reparations represents the unfinished revolution for bourgeois-democratic rights that have never been fully won by Black people in the United States, in Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

The reparations demand addresses the internal colonization that Black people are still subjected to in a country like the United States, dominated by whites based on their greater numbers and various degrees of privilege.

Only a socialist revolution, the total expropriation of the means of producing everything in society by the multinational working class, can liberate labor from capitalist slavery. As we continue to fight for progressive reforms under capitalism, only socialism can win and guarantee full democratic rights, including the right to housing, education, health care, jobs, food, equality and much more.

While imperialism is an economic system based on carving up the world's resources and displacing and impoverishing hundreds of millions of people to make profits, socialism is an economic system based on an affirmative-action process of systematically eradicating all the inequalities based on the existence of classes.

The George Bushes and John Ashcrofts would not be working overtime in building more prisons, passing extreme reactionary, repressive laws like the Patriot Acts I and II, attacking reproductive rights and same-sex marriage, or carrying out bloody wars for empire if they were not fearful of the inevitable united upsurge of the workers and oppressed.

Our attitude toward nationalism of the oppressed is not one of being on the defensive, but rather deepening our resolve to show our anti-imperialist solidarity by fighting racism and at the same time promoting our multinational, working-class, pro-socialist perspective.

We are duty bound to support the right to self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including the right to separation. We don't advocate separation, but defend it as a political demand to build solidarity. Revolutionary socialists and communists of all nationalities must understand that to support and defend the struggles of nationally oppressed peoples here and abroad against imperialism and colonialism is part and parcel of the struggle for worldwide socialism, including right here in the United States. ♣



Seminole delegation in Wash., D.C., in 1825 led by "Negro Abraham," an African Seminole who was enslaved in Georgia before escaping to sanctuary with the Seminoles in Florida.

Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice!



By Saladin Muhammad

January 25, 2007

Saladin Muhammad is a leader of the Black Workers League. The BWL is a political collective engaged in work in the trade union movement, Black political power movement and other social-justice movements in North Carolina, parts of the U.S. South and other areas. For more information, write to BWL, P.O. Box 934, Rocky Mount, NC 27802.

Discontent, anger and resistance against U.S.-led imperialism is rapidly growing among the world's people, particularly in the former colonies and neo-colonies in the Global South and among the oppressed nations, nationalities, undocumented immigrants and working-class women inside of the United States.

The dismantling of the Soviet Union and socialist camp of states, economic alignments and social movements—and the resulting ideological crisis it has caused for socialism as a movement for democracy, workers' power, self-determination and women's emancipation with its varying weaknesses—represents a major setback for the struggle against U.S.-led imperialism. It has made the importance of the struggle against U.S. imperialism inside the United States all the more critical to the re-emergence of a revolutionary international movement.

The role of the U.S. government as an imperialist state has been further magnified in the past 10 years by the so-called war on terrorism in the Middle East, centered around the oppression of Palestine and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; the attack on immigrant rights; racist immediate and ongoing responses to the disaster and suffering triggered by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, impacting the U.S. Gulf Coast region. Any serious movement seeking to challenge U.S. imperialism must grow out of these three arenas of struggle and be led by the most oppressed sectors within these strategic movements, linked to a global strategy and solidarity.

War, exploitation and fear: tools of imperialism

The militarization of U.S. imperialism's global strategy for economic and political domination over the past 20 years reflects the increased power of the U.S. military-industrial complex—an alliance connecting the U.S. military establishment, the arms industry and major oil and energy corporations as a powerful section of the U.S. ruling class. It is shaping the direction of U.S. domestic and global capitalist policies as well as the new structures and repressive laws governing the U.S. imperialist state.

The U.S. imperialist state's international character includes an infrastructure of military bases in 120 countries around the world and a global network of covert intelli-

gence operations and contracted combatants that carry out actions to create favorable conditions for the global expansion of U.S. capital. Regimes which impose restrictions or exclude U.S. foreign investments, refuse to pay debts to U.S. banks, nationalize U.S. overseas holdings or support national democratic movements have been threatened into submission, subverted or invaded, resulting in the imposition of client regimes favorable to U.S. imperialism.

U.S. imperialism's global power therefore relies on the stability of the U.S. imperialist nation-state and its ability to manage or repress social movements inside of the United States that threaten the capitalist system and its many ideological, social and institutional constructs that foster a national chauvinism which divides the masses, particularly the workers, and that defends the state.

U.S. imperialism's global strategy is a continuation of its white and male supremacist ideology of "manifest destiny" that built the U.S. "nation"—a settler state whose sense of national identity was forged on the basis of the genocide and oppression of Indigenous Native American nations and peoples, domestically colonized African American and Chicano and other oppressed nations and peoples, the super-exploitation of the working classes and the social and economic oppression of women within a tiered and unequal democracy that makes "citizenship" a pre-condition for democratic and human rights.

Full citizenship rights were only granted to white males during the first 90 years of the U.S.'s existence as a "nation". The U.S. imperialist state thus represents the capitalist ruling class's superstructure embodying and enforcing systems of national, class and gender oppression institutionalized through a system of "earned" democracy, defined by the needs of capitalist expansion and profits. The conquest and consolidation of the Americas as a U.S. imperialist empire was the initial goal of "manifest destiny."

The failure of U.S. imperialism to fully expand and consolidate its ideological dominance and state power throughout the Americas, and its inability to stop socialism from gaining some ideological credibility in this region, has been a major weakness in its global strategy and possibly accounts for the reemergence of socialism as a growing movement in Latin America. This failure "partly" accounts for the xenophobia being shaped by government policies, laws and the media around the immigration issue, centered largely on opposing the massive influx of undocumented Mexican and Latin@ workers to the United States in search of work.

While seeking to super-exploit the vast immigrant labor force, U.S. imperialism is also trying to make these workers a main scapegoat for the economic crisis facing U.S. workers, including African Americans. The Bush-led government and corporate media is trying to exploit fears about terrorism in order to build support for govern-



March for NY transit workers strike, Dec. 2005.

Photo: Roberto Mercado

ment attacks on immigrant workers and their rights as an issue of protecting U.S. national security.

Dividing the U.S. working class

U.S. bourgeois democracy defines the electoral arena as the sole basis for obtaining political power. Oppressed nationalities are taught to view themselves politically mainly as voting blocks, to align with either of the corporate parties to bargain for rights and advances in society.

The appointment of a few token Black and Latin@ misleaders to government posts and corporate boards, and the existence on the books of civil-rights legislation, has not stopped the racist scapegoating and genocidal direction of U.S. government and corporate power. Nor has it changed the reality of national oppression. These token appointments have not stopped the elimination of basic democratic and human rights.

White workers, the most convinced about bourgeois democracy within the working class—which is further encouraged by the trade unions—see these voting blocks of oppressed nationalities as a threat to white-skin privilege and associate the economic problems they face with increased immigration and the past social programs won by the African American struggles of the 1960s and 1970s.

This ability to oppress all of the oppressed nationalities and to keep them divided on the one hand, and to divide white workers from all oppressed nationality workers on the other, has been one of the main strengths of U.S. imperialism in forestalling its demise from a revolutionary movement within its national borders.

Breaking with national chauvinism

What is required to effectively challenge U.S. imperialism in this period are working-class-led movements with the potential to challenge and break with national chauvinism and build multinational and international solidarity—solidarity that goes beyond the bourgeois margins of acceptable mass protest to directly challenge U.S. economic and political power.

The African American liberation movement, in the form of the Civil Rights movement during the McCarthy period following World War II, is one such example. The year-long Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott in 1955 helped to break the paralysis and defensive state of the left and social movements, which were under attack as communists and as a threat to U.S. national security. This was the era that witnessed the U.S. government execution of the Rosenbergs on charges of being “communist spies.”

In the current period and climate of the U.S. imperialist war in Iraq, as part of the larger so-called war on terrorism and the enactment of repressive legislation eliminating many civil rights, the Latin@-led campaign for immigrant rights dared to conduct a national political strike on May Day 2006 that mobilized millions of Latin@s, undocumented workers and citizens to boycott work, businesses and schools in a show of collective power. It is helping to build a mass struggle against the war at home

inside the U.S. as a major front of the global struggle against U.S. imperialism. This struggle has set an important political tone about the need to exercise working-class and people's power beyond the electoral arena.

The powerful December 2005 public transportation strike in New York City, led by the largely Black and Latin@ Transport Workers Union Local 100, gained massive community support and national and international attention and helped to demonstrate the power of workers in the trade unions when the most oppressed sectors—African American and Latin@ workers—are organized, active and play a major leadership role.

However, it also shows that without a politicized, rank-and-file-based-and-led movement that is anti-racist throughout the wider trade union movement, the unions fall short in their support for struggles that promote the power and demands of Black and Latin@ workers. Real rank-and-file support for the strike from major unions in New York could have led to the repeal of the Taylor Law, which denies all public workers the right to strike.

Likewise, the failure of the trade unions to take actions demanding that the U.S. government rescue the dying and suffering people in the Gulf Coast during the nearly week-long Hurricane Katrina- and Rita-triggered disaster in August 2005 points to a non-readiness of organized labor to respond to crises facing its most oppressed sectors. Over a year later, the trade unions have not yet taken up a serious campaign demanding protections for dispersed survivors, or to reorganize the dismantled and dysfunctional unions in the Gulf Coast to help fight for worker rights in the so-called recovery efforts.

Katrina disaster: What good is citizenship?

The Hurricane Katrina disaster was a 21st-century snapshot of the genocidal direction of the U.S. government. It brought about the largest displacement of African Americans in the U.S. South since the post-Reconstruction period at the end of the 19th century. It represents the most extreme example in the current period of the U.S. policy of gentrification and ethnic cleansing that is taking place throughout the country against working-class African American and oppressed nationality communities in the major cities.

It made clear that even with “full” citizenship, oppressed nationalities inside the United States will be treated like oppressed nations and considered expendable and a threat to U.S. national security. The lack of funding for infrastructure to protect lives and communities, the super-exploitation of labor and the subjection to special laws, racial profiling and police harassment bares this out.

Thus the struggle against HR 4437 and the fight for immigrant rights is more than a legislative struggle to be waged mainly in the electoral arena. It is more akin to the Black Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1950s and 1960s demanding desegregation, democratic rights and self-determination.

The contradictions of national oppression inside the United States are once again

sharpening in such a way that the role of the U.S. government as an instrument of ruling-class oppression is becoming clear to the oppressed nationalities, particularly its working-class sectors.

The system of national oppression is anchored by African American national oppression. Not because it was the first experience of national oppression in what became the United States—we know that the experience of Native peoples was the first. It is because of the role that Black labor has played in the historical development of U.S. capitalism as the economic base for the institutionalized racist political and social structures.

African Americans need a national liberation front

There has yet to be a major national mobilization among African Americans in response to the Gulf Coast disaster reflecting their deep anger against the U.S. government for this crime against humanity.

Yes, the national consciousness and mass base of the African American liberation movement does exist and has been fighting hundreds of local battles. The massive mobilizations in the form of the Million Man, Million Woman, Million Family, Million Youth, Millions for Reparations, Million Worker and Millions More Marches are examples of the African American liberation movement's capacity to mobilize. However, these national mobilizations have been more acts of mass protest and not a call to action for the African American masses to exercise real power and challenge the rule of racist and corporate power. These mobilizations often called on Black people to only withhold their dollars as a consumer market. A struggle for power must also involve a direct challenge to the capitalist means of production around political demands for power.

The continuous attacks on African Americans—like the brutal and senseless police killing of Amadou Diallo and thousands more throughout the country, massive unemployment, the destruction of the welfare system as a basic social safety net for the most oppressed and exploited, high incarceration rates, gentrification, and political disenfranchisement—have created a kind of numbness among African Americans. Being under a constant state of attack can desensitize people, affecting their sense of urgency in responding to those attacks and the attacks on other oppressed peoples.

The fragmentation of the African American liberation movement, and especially the murder, exile, incarceration and demise of its main revolutionary nationalist and communist forces, has also made it increasingly difficult to mount a national fight-back against widespread national oppression. A regrouping of the African American liberation movement is critically important to waging an effective struggle for African American self-determination and radical change.

Hundreds of organizations have emerged throughout the country, and especially in African American communities, as part of the relief and Reconstruction movement in response to the suffering of Gulf Coast survivors and victims. These organizations are learning firsthand that despite being in the richest country in the world, without organization and power the needs of Black and poor people—no matter how dire—will

not be adequately addressed by this government and system.

African Americans need a national political framework with an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and internationalist program—a national liberation front—to help unite and radicalize many of these mass organizations. This would help to bring about the emergence of a powerful African American-led Reconstruction movement capable of reawakening the militant mass character of the national African American liberation movement.

Struggles for self-determination key zones of power

It is not necessary to argue about precise formulations about the various U.S. national questions. The main criteria should be the histories of national resistance based on struggles against national oppression as opposed to national chauvinism, which represents the main difference between the nationalism of oppressed and oppressor nations.

However, it is important to point out the historical regions and social class pillars of national oppression—the South and Southwest Black and Latin@ working class. These are the regions with the highest concentrations of African American people (55 percent) and Mexican people (50 percent) and the largest section of the Latin@ population; where Black and Brown labor is the most exploited and least unionized; and where political disenfranchisement is the most blatant. Combined, they make up the new and changing face of the U.S. working class in this period of globalization. African American and Latin@ self-determination in these regions would constitute strong bases of internal opposition against U.S. imperialism.

The fragmentation of the progressive social movements for democracy and self-determination, particularly among the two largest oppressed nationality and working class sectors—African Americans and Latin@s—greatly weakens the struggle against U.S. imperialism, distorts the multinational class struggle and allows the competition for jobs and services to sharpen tensions among those who should and must be allies if there is going to be a real democratic and socialist revolution in the United States.

Under working-class leadership, the movements against national oppression can begin to see themselves as having the power to shut down major arteries of the U.S. economy and society, giving them power beyond their numbers as voting blocks to make demands on the U.S. government and corporate ruling class.

The temptation to declare the Latin@ upsurge demanding immigrant rights as purely a workers' struggle, and to play down the national demands, would be a serious error. This has been a major reason for weaknesses in developing a perspective and national fight-back around the Gulf Coast disaster—the ambivalence of organizing it as a struggle against national oppression and for self-determination based on the African American majority and leadership of the African American working class, in alliance with all workers in New Orleans, throughout the Gulf Coast and nationally.

The anti-war movement, as important as it has been in shifting mass sentiment against the war, has not been able to create the level of struggle and pressure on the

U.S. imperialist state and economy to effectively alter the balance of power and force the United States to retreat from its current strategy.

In an effort to appeal to the white working class, the anti-war movement has not seriously made the connection between the war abroad and the war at home, which shows its most devastating effects on Black and Latin@ workers and communities.

Building a mass anti-imperialist movement

How to unite the masses into a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement is an ongoing question facing revolutionary forces in this country. Should it take the form of a multinational struggle of workers and oppressed nations, or a multi-racial workers' struggle? They are different. The latter often means liquidating or glossing over the national demands. The failure to support the right of self-determination in practice has been a major impediment to building solid and lasting working-class unity.

This raises the question about the role of the conscious political forces—of revolutionaries—in the spontaneous national movements. Too often, there has been a practice of mainly trying to recruit from the national movements into smaller revolutionary organizations that are majority white and of middle-class background. There is often little or no effort to help organize and strengthen the working-class leadership and organizing capacity of the national movements.

Part of the historical weakness of the socialist left in struggling against racism and white national chauvinism has been its across-the-board opposition to Black Nationalism—seeing it as a bourgeois and reactionary tendency. This has led many on the left to shy away from important African American struggles and building principled and long-term relations with Black liberation organizations.

A political struggle and perspective is needed that moves beyond defensive protest, and focuses more on struggling to win power over key social institutions and areas of government at the local, state, regional and national levels, along with a strong labor movement. The masses must be drawn into political struggle in every conceivable way. Working-class women and young people must build strong organizations within these national movements in order to ensure that the struggle against women's oppression and for youth input is an integral part of shaping national demands. They must provide leadership in the national struggles so that new leadership can emerge.

U.S. imperialism is frightened by the possibility that the African American liberation movement might call for a national political strike similar to the May Day mobilization by the Latin@ communities. Even more frightening is the possibility of an African American and Latin@ alliance, under the leadership of Black and Latin@ workers, calling general strikes for self-determination. This would widen and deepen the impact of the strike beyond those sectors predominated by each of the oppressed peoples. It would also prevent the corporate ruling class from using one oppressed nationality to undermine the power of the other.

Building the convergence of these movements also demands respect for their in-

dependence and diversity. Thus, a strategic alliance between African American and Latin@ national movements must be concretized and built around real struggles that enable both to see the power in unity to make radical changes in the interests of democracy and revolutionary transformation. The necessary bridges must be built that will help them converge at the local, regional and national levels. This is why it is so important to focus this alliance today on the struggles for Reconstruction in the Gulf Coast and the struggle for immigrant rights.

These two struggles have the potential to become the starting point for building an African American and Latin@ alliance that serves as the anchor for a united democratic front of oppressed nationality, workers' and social-justice movements against U.S. imperialism.

Building the long-term convergence of these movements also requires rebuilding the revolutionary organizations and the leadership of these movements, and forging a multinational revolutionary alliance of these organizations around an anti-imperialist program and strategy.

If the U.S. working class is going to become a revolutionary force, it must be prepared to follow the leadership of the African American and Latin@ working class, including supporting their movements for self-determination as being in the interest of defeating imperialism. ♣

Building revolutionary consciousness

By Professor Tony Van Der Meer

*Co-chair, Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee
From a talk at the conference "Preparing for the Rebirth of the
Global Struggle for Socialism" in New York, May 13, 2006*



How do we build mass revolutionary consciousness among oppressed nationalities and working people in this nation? How do we get working people to become conscious of themselves as an exploited and oppressed class while also taking

into consideration the deeper divisions that are centered on race and gender?

If white workers can't see how institutional racism and cultural imperialism has created internalized white supremacy on their part, how can they see how racism—be it personal, systemic, covert or overt—not only dehumanizes non-whites, but divides the very class of people whose lives are smothered by the political, cultural and economic elite of this nation?

While there are many different movements, the Black liberation movement, the undocumented worker movement and the antiwar movement are three that have greater potential for building the class solidarity critical in forging an anti-imperialist movement.



Katrina survivors protest at FEMA office in Washington, D.C., in 2006.

Hurricane Katrina has re-surfaced the central issue of self-determination and reparations for African Americans in perhaps the sharpest ways.

Katrina is not an isolated political act, it is an extreme example of a form of gentry-

fication that is happening to African Americans and other oppressed nationalities throughout this country.

At the recent 2005 Millions More March, hundreds of thousands of African Americans participated in another historical gathering. The march raised strongly the quest of justice for Katrina survivors, had a strong anti-war presence and an internationalist perspective, with a video broadcast of solidarity from Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban People's National Assembly, and Prime Minister Patterson of Jamaica.

The recent mass demonstrations in support of undocumented immigrant workers are a breath of fresh air. This development was centered more around the historical bases of the Chicano national movement fighting for self-determination in the Southwest, which played a major role in this important political upsurge, than getting Democrats to replace Republicans in November.

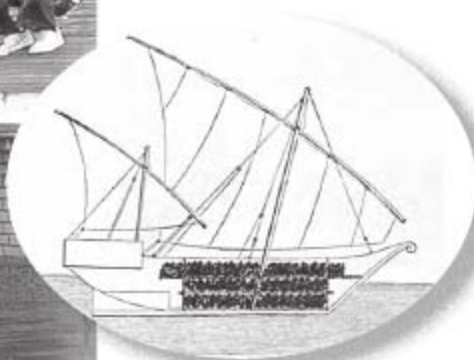
As a result of the call for a national day of absence on the 50th anniversary of Rosa Parks' arrest, Boston developed the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee. In many ways the committee is an example of "forging class solidarity; unity with the oppressed and overcoming fragmentation in the movement" [the title of the conference panel]. The Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee was an alliance of the Black liberation movement, labor and the anti-war movement connecting Katrina, immigration, violence, workers' rights and jobs, health care and housing to the billions being spent on the Iraq war.

It is becoming clearer everyday that we need an anti-imperialist movement. However, we must recognize the racial, class, gender, cultural, political and ideological differences in order to build a common ground and develop a program that speaks for the oppressed and by the oppressed. The rank and file of the working class must be challenged and supported in opposing policies that are diametrically opposed to its own interests.

We must go door to door, school to school and shop to shop and develop a genuine relationship and dialog with the youth and working masses, employed and unemployed. ✎

II. The Material Basis for Reparations in the U.S.

New Orleans,
Aug. 2005;
Depiction
of Middle
Passage.



Reparations & Black liberation

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, June 6, 2002

Lawsuits have been filed in New York and New Jersey targeting corporations that profited from the slave trade. These class-action lawsuits name three companies: Fleet Boston Financial, Aetna and CSX.

Fleet Boston grew out of a bank established by a merchant whose ships transported African slaves.

Aetna is an insurance company that encouraged slave owners to insure human property—not to protect their slaves, but to protect their investment in case of the slaves' deaths.

CSX emerged from another company that used slave labor to build railroad lines.

The lawsuit estimates that the wealth in the United States created by the unpaid wages of slave labor is today worth \$1.5 trillion.

Deadria Farmer-Paellman is the lead plaintiff and initiator of this suit. At a recent press conference, she stated, "My grandfather always talked about the 40 acres and a mule we were never given. These companies benefited from working, stealing and breeding our ancestors, and they should not be able to benefit from these horrendous acts."

Political activist and attorney Roger Wareham filed this lawsuit on behalf of all African Americans. According to Wareham, the lawsuit is not about demanding monetary compensation for the descendants of African slaves in the U.S. Any money won from the lawsuit would go to a collective fund to help improve the housing, health care and education of African Americans.

Wareham, on a recent interview on the Black-oriented WABC-TV show "Like It Is," told host Gil Noble, "Our strength is that the reparations lawsuit is part of a movement. The stronger the movement, the greater the possibility of the success of the suit. The most important thing is the success of the movement. The suit is just another part of that river of struggle that we are involved in."

The December 12th Movement and the National Black United Front have called a "Millions for Reparations" national rally to take place in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 17, 2002, the 115th anniversary of Black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey's birth. The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America is also building the demonstration.



Marcus Garvey

Gov't fears exposure of slavery's legacy

The U.S. government has a despicable history of downplaying and outright dismissing the issue of reparations. To grant compensation to millions of descendants of African slaves would expose the institutionalized racism that African Americans and other people of color still suffer today.

The disproportionate number of African Americans populating U.S. prisons is just one glaring example of the legacy of slavery.

Congressional Black Caucus member John Conyers from Michigan back in 1989 introduced bill HR 40, called "Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act." Conyers said that, "African slaves were not compensated for their labor. More unclear, however, is what the effects and remnants of this relationship have had on African Americans and our nation from the time of emancipation through today. I chose the number of the bill, 40, as a symbol of the 40 acres and a mule that the United States initially promised freed slaves."

Conyers cited a number of objectives of the bill—including setting up a commission that "would then make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies to redress the harm inflicted on living African Americans."

Malcolm X also raised the question of reparations in a speech on Nov. 23, 1964, in Paris. "If you are the son of a man who had a wealthy estate and you inherit your father's estate," he said, "you have to pay off the debts that your father incurred before he died. The only reason that the present generation of white Americans are in a position of economic strength ... is because their fathers worked our fathers for over 400 years with no pay."

The reparations struggle intensified with the military defeat of the Confederacy at the hands of the Union Army at the end of the Civil War. The victorious Northern

government promised the newly freed slaves in the South “40 acres and a mule,” in effect acknowledging that brutal slave labor had not only greatly enriched the coffers of the former slave masters but also the emerging U.S. capitalist economy.

This just compensation for the freed people never came to fruition due to the counter-revolution that destroyed Reconstruction. In the “Compromise of 1877,” the Union Army abandoned the freed slaves, who had tried to bring about real social equality in the South by establishing their own institutions for political empowerment and elevation of their living and educational standards. For 10 years, the Union Army had played the role of a buffer between this progressive, democratic process and the former Confederate forces, who regrouped during Reconstruction.

The counter-revolution then evolved into a bloody terrorist campaign that drove the freed slaves to accept semi-slavery conditions. Under sharecropping, which still exists today, the former slaves went back to tilling the land of their former owners. They weren’t owned outright anymore, but had to work on the plantations for slave wages.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court legally sanctioned segregation as “separate but equal.”

Reparations struggle has taken many forms

In his 1903 masterpiece, “The Souls of Black Folks,” W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, “the problem of the 20th century is the color line.” Many Black activists and writers have looked to Du Bois’s words for inspiration in the continuing fight for Black liberation. Reparations became a very important focus in the Black struggle for the right to self-determination.



W.E.B. Du Bois

The Back to Africa mass movement in the 1920s and 1930s, led by the charismatic Marcus Garvey, was in its own way a demand for reparations. When the Black Panther Party created free breakfast programs and free access to clinics in the inner cities during the 1960s, this was another unique call for reparations. Affirmative action programs are also a form of reparations.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., leader of the traditional Civil Rights movement, made a plea for reparations in his 1964 book, “Why We Can’t Wait.” He wrote, “No amount of gold could provide an adequate compensation for the exploitation and humiliation of the Negro in America (or the Caribbean, or Brazil) down through the centuries. Not all the wealth of this affluent (American) society could meet the bill. Yet a price can be placed upon unpaid wages. The ancient common law has always provided a remedy for the appropriation of one human being by another. The law should be made to apply for American (Caribbean and Brazilian) Negroes. The payment should be in the form of a massive program by the government of special, compensatory measures, which could be regarded as a settlement in accordance with the accepted practice of common law. Such measures would certainly be less expensive than any computation based on two centuries of unpaid wages and accumulated interest. I am proposing, therefore, that just as we granted a G.I. Bill of Rights to war

veterans, America launch a broad-based and gigantic Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged, our veterans of the long siege of denial.”

The struggle for reparations received a tremendous boost at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa last fall. The call for reparations, along with equating Zionism with racism, compelled the U.S. and Israeli governments to withdraw their high-level delegations from the conference. The Durban conference helped to provide worldwide exposure about the long-term, devastating impact of Western imperialism and colonialism on nationally oppressed people everywhere. ✿

Capitalism built on racism Reparations now! Growing movement demands compensation for centuries of slavery

Workers World Party statement, Aug. 22, 2002

Right now the Pentagon war machine, already grinding the Afghani population under its treads, is swinging its gun barrels toward the people of Iraq—who have endured a decade of impoverishment, illness and more than a million deaths as a result of U.S.-led economic sanctions. The brass in the Washington war rooms have also locked into their crosshairs the liberation struggle in Colombia.

Child malnutrition is soaring to emergency levels in Palestine as the Israeli settler state uses F-16 attack planes, tanks and missiles—all stamped “Made in the USA”—to wreak death and destruction on the Palestinians in their own land.

The United States has its eye on the prize in the Middle East: oil profits. But this imperialist goliath owes the peoples of the region a massive debt.

Bush and company boast that the United States is the richest country on the planet as they wage their imperial “endless” war to re-colonize whole parts of the globe. But it is class warfare, carried out against the workers and oppressed peoples on this continent and around the world, that has amassed that great fortune and concentrated it in the manicured hands of a tiny portion of the population.



Malcolm X

Reparations are long, long overdue

Workers World Party lauds the work of African American activists in this country who have used the capitalists’ own court system to lay bare the depth and breadth of corporation profits—then and now—garnered from the trans-Atlantic slave trade and from the economic system of slavery itself.

And Workers World salutes those who rally in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 17 to demand long-deferred reparations for the slave labor of generations of Black people in

this country. Our members, of all nationalities, will swell the ranks on the National Mall.

This demonstration proves that the demand for reparations is growing louder and stronger. It takes place in the political capital of Capital, surrounded by the marble colonial mansions of power—including the White House and U.S. Capitol, which were built with the sweat and toil of unpaid, enslaved Black laborers.

The landed aristocracy of the South got rich off the labor and blood of African peoples. And so did the merchant capitalists, bankers, traders and others who made obscene profits off the holocaust of the Middle Passage.

Reparations for slavery—yes! Though it is only a small measure of recognition of the crimes of slavery, justice delayed is justice denied.

The same wealthy capitalist scions owe reparations to Native nations for the robbery of land and enslavement of their peoples. The piecemeal theft of whole chunks of Mexico is still a huge unpaid debt. So is the virtual enslavement of Chinese railroad laborers and other immigrants who were worked for pennies from dawn to dusk until they dropped or died from exhaustion and hunger.

Once U.S. capital grew too expansive to be held within its own borders, it became an insatiable imperialist behemoth that ravaged the land, labor and resources of peoples around the world.

Today, the movers and shakers from Wall Street to teak-lined corporate boardrooms are outraged by another move for reparations: that by the government of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe to expropriate and redistribute the vast tracts of land concentrated in the hands of wealthy white farmers.

But the centuries of colonial and imperialist pillage are still draining the lifeblood from the economies of African countries. U.S. capitalist globalization represents armed robbery on a worldwide scale.

Yankee imperialism owes the peoples of Latin America, Asia and Africa reparations.

The ledgers of U.S. banks are filled with columns of “national debt” that the barons of finance capital claim oppressed countries owe them. But U.S. big business has kept these countries technologically underdeveloped, manipulated their agriculture for export, held down prices for their goods on the world market, and stolen their land, labor and resources.

For almost half a century the Cuban people have been economically strangled by the illegal U.S. blockade of their island.

Cancel the debt of the downtrodden, of course. But then let the imperialist reparations begin.



South Carolina rally for reparations in August 2004.

Photo: Millions for Reparations

Here in the belly of the beast, forced labor in the prison-industrial-complex—disproportionately people of color—puts the fortune back into the Fortune 500. As the adage says, “What is the crime of robbing a bank compared to the crime of owning one?”

Arresting the crimes of capitalism

All the wealth funneled to the ruling classes—from the slavocracy to the robber barons of capitalism—represents more than money. It is capital. Capital is a social relationship between exploiter and exploited.

The profits wrung from kidnapped and enslaved African peoples, for example, created an economic accumulation of capital that provided the foundation for today’s ruthless exploitation of workers and oppressed peoples across this country and around the world by U.S. capitalist industry and finance.

Under capitalism, workers are not paid the full value of the fruits of their labor. The unpaid portion—the surplus value—is stolen from pay envelopes and appears instead as profits in the accounting books of corporations and banks.

Of course, any white worker in this country, told by his or her boss that he or she would not receive a paycheck at all, would ask co-workers, union, family and friends to close ranks to help get justice.

Now the struggle for a modicum of payment to Black workers in this country—as recognition of a crime against the humanity of the peoples kidnapped from Africa to toil as unpaid slave laborers—is a fight that every working person in the United States has a stake in.

The unity shown by white workers in pressing this demand will help strengthen and revitalize the labor movement at a time when Wall Street wants the working class to shoulder the deepening capitalist economic crisis. Solidarity in the battle against racism is key.

A victory in the battle for reparations from the bosses will contribute to awakening the consciousness of millions of working people in this country about the underlying crime of capitalism. Every worker can understand that unpaid labor is theft—whether slave or wage-slave labor.

And it will help spur on the movement to overturn capitalism and replace it with planned production to meet human needs and wants. That’s what socialism is.

Socialism means overturning the private ownership of industries, banks and commerce that were built with collective labor.

Socialism means wresting the wealth produced by the class that works shoulder to shoulder out of the hands of the 1 percent who claim to own it all. Socialism returns that wealth—that vast pool of unpaid labor—to society for free education and health care, child care, affordable housing and to raise the standard of living of all.

Socialism is the ultimate reparation. ♣

Wachovia admits slave trade profits

By Betsey Piette

Workers World, June 10, 2005

After initially denying ties to slavery in January, executives at Wachovia Bank disclosed in a June 2 report that the bank's predecessor institutions—the Bank of Charleston, S.C., and the Georgia Railroad and Banking Company—“owned” at least 162 enslaved Africans and accepted 529 more as “collateral” on loans.

The 111-page report was prepared by the History Factory, a firm specializing in corporate archival work. It also revealed that war financier Robert Morris—a founder of a forerunner institution, Bank of North America—used profits from the slave trade to start Wachovia in 1781.

And the Bank of Charleston provided financial assistance to the Confederate government throughout the Civil War.

The admission by the North Carolina-based Wachovia, the country's fourth-biggest bank, follows similar disclosures by Lehman Brothers; JPMorgan Chase and Co., which is parent company of Bank One; and the Savings Bank of Baltimore, which is part of the Wachovia network.

Like Wachovia, JPMorgan Chase initially disavowed ties to slavery. Eventually, Morgan executives were forced to acknowledge that two predecessor banks accepted 13,000 enslaved Africans “as collateral,” taking “ownership” of 1,250 when loans defaulted.

There were over 4 million enslaved Africans by 1865, when slavery was abolished upon ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution after the military defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War. The legacy of slavery, however, continues to be felt today in rampant racism.

Major struggles for reparations are being waged. These include demands for federal reparations legislation. There are also lawsuits seeking billions of dollars from such companies as R.J. Reynolds, Aetna Inc. and CSX Corp. for the descendants of enslaved Africans.

The disclosures by these major banking institutions were made under pressure from the cities of Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Detroit and Richmond, Va. These cities passed ordinances calling on city contractors to reveal any history of making money from slavery.

Chicago's Slave Era Disclosure Ordinance, passed in 2003, was designed to demonstrate how enslaved Africans were the life blood of the original 13 colonies as well as the new United States after independence from England.

Put money where your mouth is!

Wachovia is the leading manager of the Philadelphia city government's bank accounts. Philadelphia's ordinance, signed in February, asks corporations that seek contracts with the city to disclose if they profited from slavery.

Wachovia issued an apology. Officials said the bank would offer support for community organizations working to further awareness and education of African American history. But Philadelphia attorney Michael Coard, leader of the Avenging the Ancestors Coalition, described Wachovia's action as "a publicity stunt that had nothing to do with sincere remorse but everything to do with denying its racism of the past from slave profiteering and of the present from discriminatory redlining."

Coard said: "If Wachovia is truly remorseful, it would put its money where its mouth is. Talk is cheap!"

ATAC, as part of the overall reparations movement, has been waging an increasingly successful battle to force the federal government to commemorate the enslaved Africans who were owned by George Washington at the first "White House," which is at the current site of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia.

Like most major urban areas, communities of color in Philadelphia have been devastated by decades of redlining. In much the same way that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have kept developing countries impoverished and at the mercy of the multinational banks and corporations by only extending loans with excessively high rates of interest, U.S. banks have withheld home loans from neighborhoods considered poor investment risks. This has led to widespread economic decline in these areas. Now laws prohibiting redlining are under attack from the Bush administration.

These banks could not have become the powerful financial institutions they are today if it weren't for the tremendous profits they made off the cruel slave trade and slavery. ♣

Why reparations? A look inside U.S. prisons

By Greg Butterfield

Workers World, Aug. 22, 2002

"In order for capitalism to continue to rule, any action that threatens the right of a few individuals to own and control public property must be prohibited and curtailed, whatever the cost in resources, whatever the cost in blood."

— George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye*

What's the relationship between the growing struggle for Black reparations and the plight of African American political prisoners and others in U.S. jails?

What about the more than 1,000 Arab and South Asian people detained after Sept. 11, 2001? Many of them were deported without trial or disappeared into the U.S. prison system. Do they have a connection to the reparations struggle?

The continued persecution of political prisoners shows concretely how the U.S. capitalist ruling class and government continue to deny the basic demands for Black freedom, and repress people who give voice to those demands.

Today the movement for reparations is targeting monopoly capitalists whose fortunes were built on the unpaid labor of African slaves. A generation ago, movements of Black people and other people of color challenged the capitalist system and its right to go on robbing and oppressing those whose ancestors built this country.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the FBI used Cointelpro—the Counter Intelligence Program—to spy on, divide and smash civil-rights, Black liberation and other progressive movements. Cointelpro was responsible for frame-ups, false testimony and snitching against supporters of these movements. It was responsible for jailing many of those identified as political prisoners today.

Under other names, this program has continued to the present day. It was strengthened by the “USA Patriot Act” passed in the aftermath of Sept. 11.

It’s not just a case of the government keeping those it has held for 20 or 30 years under lock and key. Political frame-ups are still going on—like the recent murder conviction of Imam Jamil Al-Amin (H. Rap Brown) in Atlanta.

The Jericho Movement, established by former political prisoners to fight for the freedom of those still behind the walls, currently lists 54 known political prisoners on its Web site. Many were members of groups like the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, the Young Lords Party and the American Indian Movement.

There are also thousands more who became political activists after being jailed, just as Malcolm X and George Jackson once did. The bloated Texas death row is a source of many political prisoners of this type. Those who become politicized in prison often pay the price of being denied parole or face new, trumped-up charges.

Many argue that all poor and working-class people in U.S. jails are really political prisoners of this racist and class-divided system.

The growth of the highly profitable prison-industrial complex gives even more weight to this broad definition. As other areas of the economy contract, it becomes a matter of economic and political urgency to jail more and more people for crimes of survival, or for no crime at all.

Evidence or politics?

Mumia Abu-Jamal is probably the best-known U.S. political prisoner. This former Black Panther leader from Philadelphia became a renowned activist-journalist, but never stopped being a target for the FBI and local police. He was framed for the murder of a white cop in 1981 and sent to death row.



Mumia Abu-Jamal

If it were simply a matter of law or evidence, Abu-Jamal would be walking free today. His trial was an unconstitutional sham. The evidence of his innocence, and of police tampering and intimidation of witnesses, has grown year by year.

For the rich and powerful beneficiaries of capitalism and white supremacy, Abu-Jamal’s case isn’t about guilt or innocence. It’s about setting an example. If you resist, they are saying, we could put you on death row next.

But if their plan was to use Abu-Jamal's case to spread fear and passivity, they've failed miserably.

Far from being demoralized, Abu-Jamal has continued to resist every threat against his life and every petty harassment by his jailers. His articles and statements have played a pivotal role in educating a whole generation of activists about the nature of U.S. prisons, racism, imperialism and the right to fight back.

Abu-Jamal and his supporters have used his case to spotlight abuses of the legal system. He has helped make the United States an international pariah for its racist use of the death penalty.

Last December a federal judge struck down Abu-Jamal's death sentence—but not his conviction—on a technicality. The judge refused to consider the overwhelming evidence of his innocence. A recent U.S. Supreme Court decision cast doubts over that ruling, and Abu-Jamal has not been removed from death row.

In July, two longtime political prisoners—Black activist Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom) of the New York 3 and ailing Native warrior Leonard Peltier—were denied parole.

Six Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war remain in U.S. jails for the "crime" of demanding independence and reparations for their homeland, the world's last official colony.

The MOVE 9, two of the Angola 3, Sundiata Acoli, Marilyn Buck, Marshall Eddie Conway, Mutulu Shakur, Eddie Hatcher, and dozens more remain imprisoned, though their spirits of struggle are unbroken.

Long campaigns have won some significant victories in recent years. In 1999, 11 Puerto Rican activists were finally released. Black Panther Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt was freed in 1997 after more than a quarter-century in jail.

But for every Ramona Africa or Safiya Bukhari who has won her freedom, there are also casualties like Albert Nuh Washington and Merle Africa, who died still fighting for justice behind bars. Others are forced to live in exile, like Assata Shakur.

Among the recent detainees of Arab and South Asian descent are Palestinian political activists like the recently released Jaoudat Abouazza. A U.S. citizen, Abdullah al Muhajir (Jose Padilla), has been held for months without charges.

What will happen if the United States goes to war with Iraq? If parents whose children—Black, Latin, white, etc.—have been sent off to war dare to protest, will Bush and Ashcroft start rounding them up?

The struggles for reparations and political prisoners are really one and the same. Both are struggles against the national oppression and class exploitation engendered by capitalism. The intersection and unity of these movements will strengthen them and help them to grow.

To learn more about political prisoners, visit the Web sites www.millions4mumia.org www.jerichomovement.com and www.freepeltier.org. ♣

Reparations for African Americans

By Pam Parker

From a talk at the Dec. 2-3, 2001, Workers World Party conference in New York



One of the main focuses of the progressive movement here is the struggle against racism and the prison-industrial complex. We should include in this discussion the fight for reparations for African Americans in the United States.

Workers World Party raises the question of reparations worldwide as part of our demand for self-determination for all oppressed peoples. Reparations are more than affirmative action. They include money, land and other goods owed for years of abuse and repression.

In the case of African Americans, it would be payment on the debt owed for the vast amount of wealth that was created as a result of slavery.

Of course the bourgeoisie in this country tries to minimize the importance of this issue or twist the argument around to make it appear that oppressed people are looking for handouts. They try this with most everything that's important to the working class. But the world is so small with the explosion of the Internet and other technological advances that there aren't many things the bourgeoisie can get away with anymore.

None of the old arguments are working. The bosses argue that anyone can "make it" under capitalism, if they just work hard enough. What people are discovering in record numbers is that this system is not designed for us all to "make it." What it's designed to do is create super-profits and maintain large numbers of "expendable" people, which help toward that end.

They have discovered that there is so much wealth in this country, but that this system is not designed to allow the equitable distribution of it. And they're angry!

That's why the question of reparations is so important to the anti-racist struggle. It flies in the face of the bourgeois arguments and it does so shamelessly. People are saying, "No, we're not looking for handouts, we're looking for give-backs, and if they don't come soon they'll be take-backs."

The struggle for reparations not only clarifies the reality of racism, but explains how there are still oppressed nations inside the U.S. It's a way to acknowledge that slavery did exist as an economic institution in this country and that the legacy of slavery is still alive.



Striking Memphis sanitation workers, 1968.

Don't get me wrong. We can in no way put a dollar sign on slave labor. There isn't enough money in the world to repay the debt owed to oppressed people as a result of slavery and repression. But this fight is an important tool in the broader struggle for self-determination and an end to the oppression of all people. ✊

Black farmers demand justice

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, July 18, 2002

According to the 1920 U.S. census, there were over 925,000 Black farmers who controlled over 15 million acres, mainly based in the southern Black Belt.

Today, the number of Black farmers has tragically decreased to between 15,000 and 18,000. They control less than a million acres collectively and are losing an estimated 1,000 acres daily.

These numbers just begin to tell the tale of the plight of those remaining Black farmers and their will to survive total extinction by any means necessary.

This will to survive was reflected in a heroic sit-in from July 1-4 at the U.S. Department of Agriculture regional office in Brownsville, Tenn. An estimated 300 Black farmers took part in this sit-in. They traveled from 16 states by car, train and pickup truck to show solidarity with five of their brother farmers who filed loans that were never processed.

These loans are necessary in order to be able to purchase land, fertilizer and seed to plant and harvest crops that can be sold to agri-businesses. If the farmers are lucky enough to produce a successful crop, they usually can pay off their loans at the end of the harvest season from their gross income.



Farmer confronts USDA official.

These five Black farmers—Coach Perkins, James Hood, Barton Nelson, Earnest Campbell and Gerald Pettaway—submitted loan applications in Fayette County. But their applications were sent to Haywood County, where they sat gathering dust for more than a month.

The five farmers were unable to produce any crops and, as a consequence, they face the prospect of thousands of dollars of debt, foreclosure on their homes and loss of their land.

The 300 Black farmers who took part in the sit-in know all too well that they could easily face the same situation.

There has been less than adequate attention paid by the big business press to this development and the issue in general.

The Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association organized the sit-in. One of the demands of the protesters was to have the five farmers meet with Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman in Washington, D.C., to discuss and resolve their grievances. There has not been any response from the Bush administration to this request. The farmers called for Veneman to be removed from office.

BFAA spokesperson Tom Burrell stated: "We're at the point right now where we're all but extinct. This is the last stand of Black farmers. If we don't get a victory in the next six months, it's curtains for the Black farmer. This is all part of a conspiracy to get rid of us... We are willing to stay in this building until we get what's necessary." The bank foreclosed Burrell's farm in 1981.

Lawsuit by 25,000 Black farmers

There are many examples that justify this righteous defiance.

For example, in 1997, six Black farmers initiated a class-action lawsuit against the USDA, charging its regional offices with racism in denying Black farmers equal access to federal loans, disaster relief payments and other programs mandated under the law for low-income farmers.

Once the original lawsuit was filed, another 25,000 Black farmers became plaintiffs in the lawsuit, *Pigford vs. Glickman*. Dan Glickman was the secretary of agriculture during the Clinton administration. Black farmers went to Glickman's office twice to demand a meeting with him. They were arrested both times.

This is not the first time that Black farmers have brought charges before the USDA. In fact, so many Black farmers had filed claims against the USDA for racial discrimination that in 1983, then-President Ronald Reagan shut down the agency. When it was reopened in 1996, there were thousands upon thousands of grievances sitting in its office.

In 1999, the USDA settled the 1997 class-action lawsuit out of court by awarding the plaintiffs \$450-\$600 million in damages. This came out to \$50,000 or less for each plaintiff—a drop in the bucket when you consider that a new tractor costs \$125,000, a new planter \$40,000 and a new cotton picker \$20,000.

Knowing the tremendous resources it takes to maintain a productive farm, the six original plaintiffs had demanded \$3 billion in damages from the USDA. They attempted to legally challenge the court's final decree along with hundreds of other farmers. But the courts would not budge.

Most of the farmers decided to take the money but were not informed by their attorneys that only 40 percent of them would receive any monetary restitution.

It is the legacy of slavery that has created a genocidal U.S. policy against southern Black farmers. And it is the injustice that they continue to face in the racist courts and from an insensitive capitalist government that has forced them to take direct action in Tennessee to show that they have the right to make a decent living from the land that their ancestors once tilled and made fertile as slave labor. ♣



Tom Burrell, a member of the Black Farmers & Agriculturalists Association, speaks to a crowd outside the USDA office in Brownsville, Tenn., July 1, 2002.

Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of slavery, sharecropping & segregation



By Consuela Lee
Workers World, Aug. 22, 2002

"We are expecting the lowest scores (Stanford Achievement Test) to come from predominantly Black schools in the Black Belt."

—Ed Richardson,
Alabama State Superintendent of Education (2000)

I was 12 years old when I silently vowed to return home to Snow Hill, Ala., in Wilcox County, after I finished college to help educate children. As a young person I was concerned that I was miles ahead of my schoolmates in basic academic skills and general knowledge. Most of my classmates were children of sharecroppers and were needed by their parents to help sow and gather crops. Consequently the school year was well underway when these students reported to class.

I returned home in 1980 to revitalize my alma mater, Snow Hill Institute, founded and built by my grandfather, William J. Edwards. The school was started in 1893; it had been closed in 1973 because of a desegregation edict.

Edwards, born on the R.O. Simpson Plantation in 1868, survived a childhood of abject poverty and illness. He attended Tuskegee Institute where, during his senior year, he registered for a class taught by Booker T. Washington. Dr. Washington exhorted his students, upon graduation, to go back home and help elevate the social status of Black people through education and vocational training.

Edwards did just that—and with the help of Tuskegee Institute and Dr. Washington bought close to 2,000 acres of land, rich in timber, for an excellent boarding school for Black youth, grades 1-12.

The school began to decline after Edwards' principalship ended in 1925. By 1973, it had lost its great purpose and academic excellence. The state of Alabama had taken charge of the academic programs in 1927.

During the summer of 1980, 45 children registered for music classes at Snow Hill Institute for Cultural Arts and Heritage. My goal was to reopen the school as an arts and educational facility. At first, I could not understand the dialect the children were speaking. Educationally, the children could not answer simple questions nor clearly say their names. There still exists today serious neglect in the state of Alabama's obligation to educate and protect our children!

In fact, the state government cares more about the economic interests of the corporations that are exporting timber out of Wilcox County and elsewhere at record numbers without paying restitution to the Black residents who live on the land.

According to a recent series of articles in the Birmingham News, Wilcox County has one of the highest percentages in the categories of poverty and infant mortality, poor education, a high rate of poor, single mothers, and inadequate health care and unemployment in Alabama. The News series labeled Wilcox County and other Black Belt counties "Alabama's Third World."

Slavery, sharecropping and segregation are the shameful hallmarks of the history of this area. In his book "Twenty-Five Years in the Black Belt," Edwards cites: "In the 1920s and 1930s, Black children were allotted 35 cents per child for education while white children received \$15 per child."

"Keep 'em ignorant!" is the battle cry of those who control Black Belt schools. I came to the sad conclusion, long before the News articles were printed, that there is a carefully planned death sentence for Black children.

This genocidal policy is sponsored by the state of Alabama, abetted by school administrators and school boards. This policy includes poorly trained teachers, unworkable computers, libraries stocked with books seldom used and months wasted teaching "how to pass" the SATs. There are very few, if any, ongoing music or other arts classes.

This death sentence accelerated with the closing of Snow Hill Institute, a national historic site that had the glorious history of academic achievement plus the indomitable and lasting spirit of a Black man who not only built an educational landmark but brought his people out of the bondage of sharecropping into the independence of landownership.

The state of Alabama, and the corporate timber interests it is subservient to, have kept the Black community in semi-slavery conditions. Reparations must be paid for the crimes committed against the multi-generations of Black people in Alabama's Black Belt.

To read Edwards' "Twenty Five Years in the Black Belt" online, go to <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/edwards/edwards.html>. ♣

**William J. Edwards (inset);
Consuela Lee
and her music
students, Snow
Hill, Ala., 1980s.**



From Bakke to Bush

Affirmative action comes under fire

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, Feb. 6, 2003

Twenty-five years ago, in 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court issued the infamous Bakke decision. The court ruled, five to four, that using racial quotas to help win some measure of equality in hiring and education was unconstitutional. Quotas are the setting aside of a certain number of openings, mainly for people of color and women, in the areas of jobs and education.

The Bakke case was centered at the University of California at Davis Medical School. Now the battleground has moved to the University of Michigan.

On Jan. 21, the U.S. Supreme Court announced that on April 1 it will hear one hour of oral arguments regarding another milestone case focused on the same issue of affirmative action. This case—actually two separate court cases combined into one—is known as Gratz and Grutter vs. Bollinger.

Jennifer Gratz and Barbara Grutter, both white, sued Lee Bollinger, former president of U-M, in 1996. They charged “reverse discrimination.”

Gratz and Grutter claimed they were denied entry into the undergraduate program and law school, respectively, because of U-M’s affirmative-action program, which sets aside some openings for Black and Latino students.

U-M’s affirmative-action program has implemented racial quotas to help create diversity by bringing students of color into its undergraduate and graduate programs. U.S. colleges and universities, private and state-run, that receive the most funding, remain predominantly white.

On Oct. 29, U-M filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court urging the court not to strike down its affirmative-action program that helps achieve diversity. The U-M News and Information Services statement stressed that a Supreme Court decision reaffirming Bakke “would produce the immediate re-segregation of many—and perhaps most—of this nation’s finest and most selective institutions.”

The statement continued, “A prohibition on the consideration of race in admissions could, for example, cut the representation of African American students at selective universities by more than two-thirds, and at accredited law schools by more than three-fourths.”

Bush administration intervenes

The Bush administration brazenly intervened in this legal battle when it asked the Justice Department to submit its own briefs to the Supreme Court supporting the abolition of the U-M racial quota programs.

In subtly racist remarks, President Bush said, “At the undergraduate level, African American students and some Hispanic students and Native American students receive

20 points out of a maximum of 150, not because of any academic achievement, but solely because they are African American, Hispanic or Native American.”

The irony is that Bush himself is a product of a racial and class quota that affirmative action confronts head on. George W. got into Yale University even though his verbal and math Scholastic Aptitude Test scores did not meet Yale’s academic standards.

His secret? He was the son and grandson of affluent alumni.

Affirmative action and anti-racist struggle

When Allen Bakke, a white medical student, sued the U-C at Davis for “reverse discrimination,” it was the first time that a great majority of people in the United States had heard of affirmative action.

Even today many people are unaware that institutionalized racism has been rooted in U.S. society for many centuries. Today, unfortunately, its legacy is alive and well in housing, health care, criminal justice, under-representation in Congress, and many other areas of the economy and society.

The mass murders of Indigenous Native nations and the enslavement of African people carried out by the government on behalf of the expansion of the U.S. capitalist market are two vivid examples of institutionalized racism. Today, Latino, Arab, Native and Asian peoples are also victims of a U.S. policy of poverty, intense repression, marginalization and super-exploitation.

In the case of people of African descent, there has been an ongoing struggle for racial equality since the end of the Civil War almost 140 years ago. The revolutionary period known as Reconstruction was an attempt by the freed people to win complete equality with whites.

That period ended tragically and abruptly in 1877 with the “Great Compromise,” when federal troops were ordered by governmental decree to withdraw from the South, abandoning the freed slaves and rendering them defenseless in a semi-enslaved existence that included sharecropping.

This betrayal ushered in an era of counter-revolution. Southern Black people suffered unmitigated terror at the hands of ultra-racist, fascist formations like the KKK and the White Citizens Council, led by former Confederate officers and slave masters. Countless thousands of Black people were lynched; none of their murderers was brought to justice.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court—dominated by Southern and Northern racist judges—ruled that the policy of “separate but equal” was constitutional, thus giving legal sanction to Jim Crow segregation.



Demonstration in support of affirmative action in April 1978.

After World War I, millions of Black people migrated to the North to escape economic and physical repression. They hoped to find equal opportunities there.

What they found was a different kind of racism: segregated housing, police brutality and low-paying jobs. Many labor unions collaborated with the bosses in denying Black workers training in better-paid, more skilled jobs. Anti-racist solidarity with Black workers by union leaders remained elusive.

When white workers went on strike, bosses often deliberately hired Black workers, who ordinarily couldn't get the jobs, to cross the picket lines. They hoped to inflame racial antagonisms and defeat the unions. For the Black workers, as for many immigrant workers today, they had no choice. It was either work or starve.

Only a vigorous organizing effort by the unions to incorporate workers of color and a campaign of anti-racist solidarity can protect all workers' jobs. But instead, conservative union officials like George Meany, the late president of the AFL-CIO, resisted opening up apprenticeship programs to Black workers as well as other workers of color and women.



Rebellions push open some doors

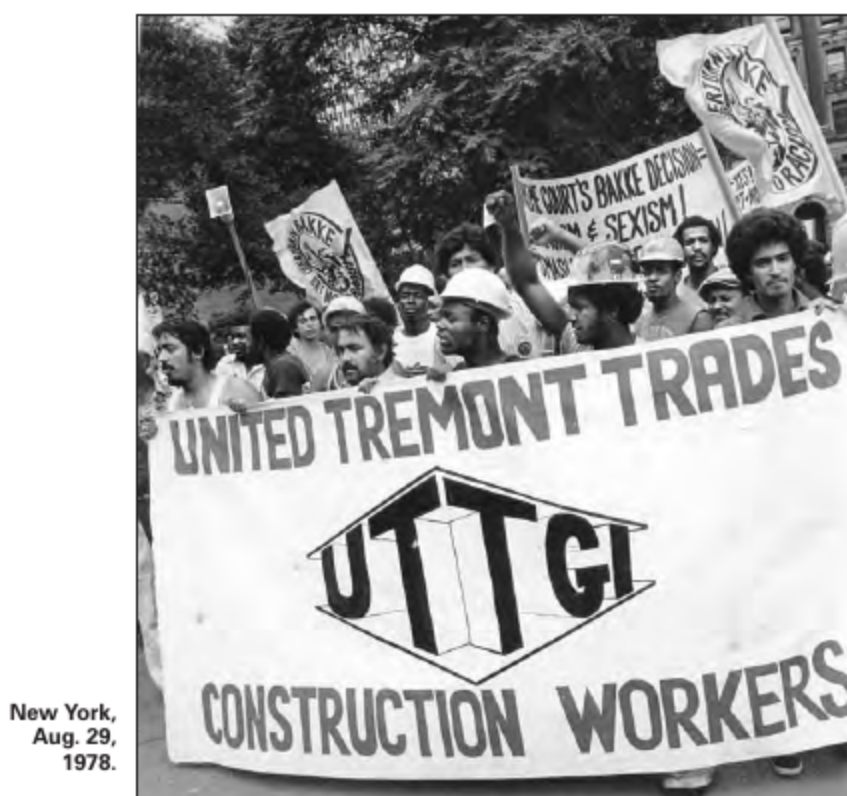
The massive Civil Rights struggles in the South and righteous rebellions of Black people against poverty and unemployment in the Northern ghettos, especially in 1965 in the Watts section of Los Angeles, forced the U.S. government to give more than just lip service to the idea of affirmative action.

Affirmative action in jobs had first been considered within the Eisenhower administration in 1953. Various commissions and agencies were later established under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Yet none of them instituted any program to redress the systematic exclusion of Black workers by racist employers.

Three years after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, African Americans composed just 8 percent of union construction workers. The electrical, asbestos, plumbing and elevator trades had an abominable number of only 1,400 Black members out of 330,000 total. (Equal Employment Opportunity News, Sept. 28, 1969)

It was during Richard Nixon's presidency that racial quotas were first used as a concrete remedy on the federal level to address racist hiring practices. Assistant Labor Secretary for Wages and Standards Arthur A. Fletcher, who was Black, rewrote the Philadelphia Plan in June 1969. It required contractors in projects that received more than \$50,000 in federal assistance to hire Black and other workers of color "in good faith."

The Office of Federal Contract Compliance, in consultation with Philadelphia contractors, was authorized to establish numerical ranges for hiring African Americans.



New York,
Aug. 29,
1978.

For instance, they were to hire 5 to 9 percent Black iron workers, with additional increases each year after 1970.

Nixon, a right-wing, law-and-order, pro-war president, flip-flopped on the issue of affirmative action. Certainly the thought of another rebellion caused the government great consternation. Some believe Nixon also used the issue to try to win over Black voters.

During this same period, students of color carried out heroic struggles on campuses, including sit-ins and strikes. These battles won open admissions, Black and Latino Studies, and full scholarships for students who had faced doors shut tight because they were either poor or not white.

Erosion of affirmative action

Since the Bakke decision, there has been slow erosion of affirmative-action programs for people of color.

In 1996, the University of Texas admissions program was temporarily dismantled by a U.S. federal appeals court. As a result, the percentage of Black first-year students dropped from a range of 4.1 to 5.6 percent before the decision, down to 2.7 percent.

Affirmative action with quotas seems to become controversial only when racist

whites scream “reverse discrimination.” It’s a false argument when you look at the sordid record of racist oppression in the United States. The place where “racial quotas” play the biggest role is in the prison population and on death row.

By the end of the 20th century, close to one-third more young Black men were in prison than in college, according to the Institute of Justice Policy. State spending for prison construction was six times higher than state spending for higher education.

Racism and capitalism go hand in hand

A recent New York Times poll showed that more than half the U.S. population supports affirmative action. The truth is that affirmative action is just one small remedy in what should be an overall effort to overcome the centuries-old legacy of slavery and white-supremacist ideology.

Workers World spoke to Larry Holmes about the current assault on affirmative action. In 1978 Holmes was co-founder of a national coalition to overturn the Bakke decision and an organizer of a national demonstration in Washington, D.C., that drew 35,000—redominantly Black youths—to protest the Bakke ruling. He is also author of



Student protest in support of affirmative action in 1978.

the pamphlet “Weber Was Wrong; the Steelworkers Were Right: A Case for Affirmative Action,” about a struggle between the Steel Workers union and a white worker who charged the union with “reverse discrimination.”

Holmes told WW: “What is happening at U-M is another round in the battle that oppressed people have waged to win a measure of progress. But that struggle has far greater potential today because people are mad as hell about Trent Lott’s racism, about the threat of war against Iraq, about skyrocketing unemployment and poverty and the whole capitalist system. And all of this anger will be brought to bear against those who want to roll back affirmative action.”

Capitalism is the root cause of racism today because this profits-first system is based on divide and conquer, not unity and solidarity.

It is because of capitalism that, in this wealthy country, there are not enough good schools for all students who apply. Racism is to the advantage of the bosses, because it makes it easier for them to keep a huge section of the workers super-exploited in low-paying jobs.

Everyone should have the right to a decent job and education, regardless of their nationality, sex, gender, sexual preference, age and abilities. These rights, now matter how much is won, will always be at risk under capitalism.

The struggle for equality and justice can only be fully achieved under socialism. It requires the kind of social education and solidarity that come with an economic system that replaces big-business ownership and its drive for profits with social ownership and the planning of production to meet human needs. ♀

III. Brief Overview of Racist Oppression & Heroic Resistance



Picking
cotton—
a legacy of
slavery and
sharecropping.



Slavery & debt

Workers World Editorial

Feb. 13, 2005

JPMorgan Chase, the second-biggest bank in the U.S., put it ever so delicately: “[The bank] had predecessors that had customers that appear to have used enslaved individuals.”

That is how a Jan. 20 statement began that was written so as not to offend—well, not to offend those tied to the slave owners, anyway. JPMorgan Chase offered its “apologies” for its links to slavery, admitting that its predecessor banks had “accepted approximately 13,000 enslaved individuals as collateral on loans and took ownership of approximately 1,250 of them when the plantation owners defaulted on the loans.”

It is the tip of an iceberg. The role of the banks in financing slavery, particularly New York banks that were also tied in with the cotton trade, remains mostly a hidden history in this country. Even JPMorgan Chase’s statement hides this history, attributing all of its transgressions to a Louisiana-based bank that it merged with in the

1930s. This month—Black History Month—would be a very good time to expose the full history of JPMorgan Chase and the other Wall Street institutions in the enslavement of African peoples before slavery was abolished by the Civil War.

A movement has grown up in this country among the descendants of the enslaved Africans to demand reparations from those who became rich through slavery. One case brought to court named JPMorgan Chase as one of 18 companies involved in slavery. The list also included Lloyds of London, FleetBoston, RJ Reynolds Tobacco, Brown & Williamson, CSX Corporation and Lehman Brothers.

The wealth of these giant banks, financial institutions and corporate monopolies is immense. Yet it was gained from the stolen labor of enslaved peoples. Any fair-minded person would agree that they owe reparations, big time.

There's really no reason that the reparations owed should be limited to those who live in this country. The countries of Africa were devastated by the European slavers, who delivered their human cargoes mostly to the Americas. The devastation was so deep that recovery has been impossible to this day.

In "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa," Walter Rodney gives the details: "No one has been able to come up with a figure representing total losses to the African population sustained through the extraction of slave labor from all areas to all destinations over the many centuries that slave trade existed. However, on every other continent from the 15th century onwards, the population showed constant and sometimes spectacular natural increase; while it is striking that the same did not apply to Africa."

Rodney explains further: "All of the countries named as 'underdeveloped' in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now preoccupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. African and Asian societies were developing independently until they were taken over directly or indirectly by the capitalist powers. When that happened, exploitation increased and the export of surplus ensued, depriving the societies of the benefit of their natural resources and labor. That is an integral part of underdevelopment in the contemporary sense."

So what happened when the world's seven imperialist powers—the U.S., Britain, Japan, France, Germany, Italy and Canada—met as the Group of Seven in early February? They made a showy announcement of an "African debt relief plan." The news reports said that they would be "forgiving the debt of some of the world's poorest countries." The fine print of what they are actually doing was quite different.



Turns out to be another publicity stunt, when what is really needed now is not just full cancellation of all "debt," but also payment of reparations. Only such a payment can begin to end the poverty and devastation that is the legacy of slavery and imperialism. ♣

Black Reconstruction The unfinished revolution

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Poet and Southern anti-racist activist

From a talk at a Workers World Party meeting in New York on Aug. 10, 2002

The economic consequences of slavery for African Americans did not end with the Emancipation Proclamation.

"Reconstruction" in the Southern United States—the period from 1865 to 1880—was a revolutionary period in which freed slaves struggled for legal, social and economic equality with their former owners. This "unfinished revolution" was stopped by a counter-revolution that followed in 1877.

The counter-revolution's consequences endured legally until the civil rights movement of the 1960s—and economically to this day.

In 1865, Union troops began to move into the defeated slave states of the Confederacy. Under the auspices of a few Union generals, freed slaves began to occupy and farm independently some of the land owned by the white slavocracy.

For instance, the 10,000-acre plantation of Jefferson Davis, former president of the Confederacy, was declared a "home colony" for freed slaves under the protection of a Black regiment. The land was farmed cooperatively and the newly freed people set up a self-government.



Black Union soldiers liberate a cotton plantation, 1860s.

An even more widespread redistribution of land took place under Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's orders in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia. There, 40,000 freed women and men settled and worked the land as their own. (Allen)

The ability to claim and farm land was central to freedom for Black people after slavery. Most lived in the rural South. There were few towns and few non-agrarian jobs available, and most Black people were farm workers. After emancipation, they needed land simply to survive—to feed themselves and their families—and to move out of servitude.

The Confederacy was militarily defeated by the Union Army in the Civil War. But the Southern white slavocracy, as an economic system, was not thoroughly uprooted and destroyed. In fact, a realignment of new and old reactionary forces took place, creating semi-slavery conditions.

Immediately after the war and the passing of the 13th Amendment that formally emancipated all slaves, the Southern white governments of the former slave states began to pass a series of laws that attempted to return freed slaves to a de facto bondage.

'Black Codes'

Beginning in Mississippi in 1865, these so-called "Black Codes" appeared to grant Black people certain legal rights, such as the right to marry, for the first time. In reality the Codes "were promulgated to control a newly fluid Black labor force." (Encyclopedia of Southern Culture)

Through these laws, the Southern plantation owners attempted to keep freed slaves bound to their land, in a kind of legal peonage. Their aim was to prevent freed slaves from becoming free labor, people able to sell their labor power as workers.

The codes were designed to control virtually every aspect of the lives of newly freed Black people. For instance, some statutes forbade freedom of movement and "migration" into a state unless the person entered into a work "bond" with a landholder. In Mississippi, as well as other states, every freed slave and everyone of African heritage had to have written evidence of a work contract.

Language in the contracts specified that contracted Black workers were to be known as "servants" and contractors as "masters." If a work contract was not possessed or was not in exact legal order, vagrancy laws were invoked to arrest the Black worker. The state or county then "hired out" the worker.

Any justice of the peace could declare someone a vagrant and have her or him arrested. In some states, any white man, officer or not, could arrest a Black person.

There was virtually no redress in the legal system. In North Carolina, for instance, Black people were allowed a status in court only in cases that did not involve white people. (DuBois)

Passing the Codes was an attempt to continue slavery. In the post-war landscape this meant an attempt to impose the most extreme form of wage slavery possible.

The Codes generally prohibited firearms to the freed slaves—many of whom had

Resistance to re-imposition of slavery

In the revolutionary period of Reconstruction, they developed new tools of resistance—the Union Leagues with their local councils, armed citizens' militias, and people's assemblies that developed into state Constitutional Assemblies in the late 1860s.

This intimidation, occurring in every county, town, village and state of the old Confederacy, included the founding of the Ku Klux Klan by Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former slave owner and Confederate general.

Every act toward freedom was a struggle. One witness recounted Black people in Mississippi, marching to the voting polls "after the manner of soldiers, armed with clubs and sticks, some of them with old swords and pieces of scythe blades." (Allen)

But the greatest significance in these struggles lay in the fact that the battle of African Americans for their bourgeois democratic rights—the right to vote, to testify in court, to form civil contracts such as marriage—was completely, inextricably and openly linked to their fight for economic justice. If they could not win re-distribution of land, through outright occupation or through reparations legislation such as the “40 acres” grants proposed by abolitionists like Thaddeus Stevens, then newly freed Black people would have no material basis for survival and no way to stand against the seizure of their newly won rights by a resurgent slavocracy.

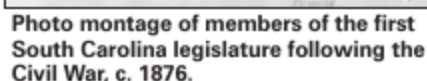


Photo montage of members of the first South Carolina legislature following the Civil War, c. 1876.

For the Southern slavocracy was not fighting these battles alone. Northern capital had its own agenda in the waging of the Civil War and also in the establishment of peace.

For instance, in a Northern newspaper the education of freed slaves was praised as an opportunity for textile manufacturers to “organize at our own doors a colony—so to speak—that will be worth more to us than any of England’s most flourishing dependencies.”

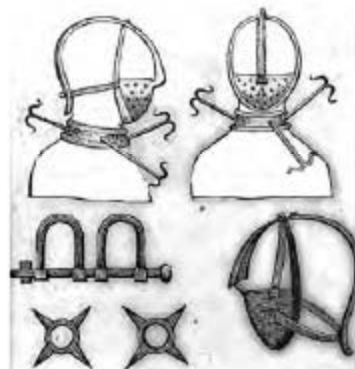
The federal government gave away millions of acres of land—that could have gone to freed slaves—to the expanding railroad interests in the South and in the West. This included public land confiscated from former slaves who had settled on it as free public property. (Allen)

The military defeat of the Southern planters ended the national struggle over who would control the future of land expansion into the West. There would be no more Missouri Compromises over whether a state would enter as “slave” or “free”—and thus over which financial interests would have an advantage there.

Defending big landowners

With the surrender of the South, Northern interests rapidly backpedaled away from supporting the freed African Americans. “To expropriate the land of the [former] slave owners (many of whom had financial ties to the merchant capital, etc., in the North) was also to question the legality of all huge land ownership. And at this very moment the big capitalists, especially the railroad companies, were getting land by the millions of acres from Congress, swindling the white masses as well as the Indians [Native Americans] in the process.” (Vince Copeland)

Black historian W.E.B. DuBois succinctly summarized the “counter-revolution of property” by saying: “How, after the war, triumphant industry in the North coupled with privilege and monopoly led an orgy of theft that engulfed the nation and was the natural child of war; and how revolt against the anarchy became reaction against democracy, North and South, and delivered the land into the hands of an organized monarchy of



finance while it overthrew the attempt at a dictatorship of labor in the South.”

The Radical Republican Party that had initially supported Black Reconstruction split after the financial panic and depression of 1873, and in the South, the business elements and white small farmers most affected by this financial crisis began to bolt to the Democrats, the party of slavery (and later, of segregation). But the Southern planters in the Democratic Party wanted the railroads that the Northern industrialists could finance, and betrayed their own party to secure the election of Republican Rutherford Hayes in 1877.



Black militia at the State house in Little Rock, Ark., 1874.

Hayes promptly ordered the withdrawal of the Federal soldiers that had provided some bulwark of protection to the revolutionary struggles in the South. These Federal troops, removed from protecting newly freed workers there, were immediately used to put down the first nationwide strike in U.S. history—a railroad strike that stretched from New York to Kentucky, Ohio and Missouri, to California. Soldiers fired on strikers, and sympathetic miners, farmers, unemployed, women, and children, wounding scores.

Meanwhile, in the South, the withdrawal of Federal troops resulted in a “White Terror” unleashed by the slavocracy—unrelenting persecution and murders of individuals, and a series of massacres of freed Black people and some remaining white allies, as they attempted to retain freedoms that had been won.

Reactionary elements called this period the “restoration of home rule.” By 1901 every former Confederate state had written “home rule” into new constitutions, thus formally and legally expressing the reaction begun in the Black Codes.

Using this repression, the slavocracy reorganized the old plantation system, worked by slave labor, into a system of sharecropping and share tenancy, which enabled cash-poor planters to minimize paying wages to farm workers. This system lasted in the South until the introduction and widespread use of tractors and mechanical cotton pickers in the 1940s and 1950s. In the mostly rural South, freed Black people and impoverished whites were forced into this economic arrangement to survive.

In the two levels of tenancy, farmers shared both the need for subsistence credit and a vulnerability to arbitrary demands by the landlord. The difference lay in this: Share tenants “often owned mules or equipment and might be able to supply some feed or fertilizer. Their furnishing needs varied, as did their supervision.” (*Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*) Thus, their share of the crop could be from two-thirds to three-fourths, less advances and interest.

Sharecroppers usually had only their labor to bargain with, no animals or tools. They depended on lien credit for necessities of life, and usually received no more than half the crop, from which interest and supplies were deducted, typically leaving them

in lifelong debt to the landlord. Two-thirds of Southern tenants were white, and among sharecroppers, there were about equal numbers of Black and white farmers. (Encyclopedia of Southern Culture)

While this combination of legal and extra-legal terror and economic coercion kept Black workers in virtual peonage, the slavocracy mounted a vicious campaign to split white farm workers and the urban working class from newly freed Black labor. Alongside racist propaganda from public officials, state governments re-seized by the planter economic interests and by new Southern industrial interests began to allocate money and benefits like education in a calculatedly racist manner.

For instance, states began to pay pensions to the "relief of needy confederate soldiers and sailors who from wounds or other cause are now unable to earn a livelihood by labor." They granted these privileges to indigent whites loyal to the slavocracy while throwing freed Black people into jail to be used as prison labor on the pretext of being "vagrants" because they had wandered searching for less oppressive landlords or fairer wages. (Alabama 1891 legal code)

But in the renewed onslaught of reaction in the South—where lynching of African American men and rape of African American women became the most notorious terror methods of white ruling class interests—there was continued resistance.

For instance, the anti-lynching campaign of Ida B. Wells-Barnett is well known to many. Born a slave in Mississippi, she became a teacher and then also the editor of a Memphis newspaper, the *Free Speech*. In 1891, she lost her teaching job when she published articles criticizing the local school system's "unequal allocation of resources to Black schools." (Wells-Barnett, "A Red Record")



Ida B. Wells-Barnett

The next year marked the beginning of her lifelong national campaign against lynching—including supporting the right to armed self-defense—as she editorially denounced the murder of three local Black men on the pretext of charges they had raped a white woman. In fact, she revealed, all three had been targeted because their business pursuits threatened the white economic establishment.

Resistance by African Americans continued in every town and farm in the South, in places still not documented by historians. For instance, in 1899, in Bibb County, Ala., which had a population of no more than 5,000 people, Black and white, the Black workers on a road detail engaged in an armed battle with their white overseer.

The precipitating incident, which must have come after many brutal indignities and assaults, was this. The overseer, Mullen, sent one of the hands, John Sanders, who was Black, after water. On returning to the spring he passed the water to other African Americans before he did to Mullen.

In the resulting battle, the overseer was killed, as were some of the Black workers; others were later lynched. A few days later, a young white worker was beaten and

driven out of the county by white vigilantes because of his expressing sympathy for the African Americans who killed overseer Mullen. This white man was seen going out armed, together with African Americans, in his neighborhood, saying that Mullen got what he deserved and that others would get the same. (Centreville Press, May 4 and 11, and June 8, 1899)

A month later, when the local newspaper reported a "crowd of [African Americans] armed in the woods" near Eoline, it also ran a story about a strike in the coal mines of the adjoining county by the Black-majority Knights of Labor. (Centreville Press, July 20, 1899)

For even as African Americans struggled for economic equity in mostly rural arenas in the South, there was a parallel resistance in the Black urban working class.

The first post-Civil-War strike by Southern women, for instance, was waged by Black washerwomen in July 1865 in Jackson, Miss. They organized themselves into a "protective association" and raised their prices.

In Alabama, ex-Union Black soldiers went on strike at the Birmingham iron works in 1866. In Mobile, a strike of Black levee workers spread to the sawmills and smaller industries. In Savannah, Ga., the dock workers, almost all Black, struck the City directly for imposing a poll tax on wharf workers. (Allen and Jacqueline Jones)

During Reconstruction and the counter-revolution, Black workers—both rural and urban—fought against their economic exploitation, in a struggle that continues today, through such campaigns as Millions for Reparations.

In addition to urban Black workers striking for fair and better wages during this time, Black farmers attempted to hold on to land they had won. Their tenacity is reflected in the fact that in 1910, in the Sea Islands area—part of the original revolutionary land re-distribution—almost 60 percent of Black farmers still owned their land.

In 1920 over 925,000 Black farmers controlled over 15 million acres. Today there are only 15,000-18,000 farmers, with less than a million acres.

The taking back of these lands continues today with the complicity of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in denying loans to Black farmers, thus furthering the interests of corporate agribusiness. Resistance also continues, however, as shown in the dramatic July 4 takeover of USDA offices in Tennessee by 300 Black farmers. (Workers World, July 18, 2002)



Freed woman learns to read, late 1800s.

The continuation of the reactionary policies of the counter-revolution that crushed Reconstruction also continued in the attempt by white landowners in the South to keep Black people from migrating North toward wage-paying jobs. The Black Codes were used against Black workers, for instance, during World War I, as they sought to travel to Northern industries, where labor was short because U.S. policies were limiting immigrant labor.

The so-called "convict lease" system grew out of the Codes. In this system, the state leased prisoners, the vast majority Black, at dramatically reduced wages, to "cotton, rice, sugarcane, and tobacco planters, coal mines, timber companies, railroad construction firms, and levee builders." (Encyclopedia of Southern Culture)

Prisoners of both sexes, sometimes as young as 8 or 9 years old, were kept on meager diets, given little or no medical care, and suffered overwork and physical abuse. (Encyclopedia of Southern Culture)

Though the system was phased out in the South in the late 1930s, we can see its resurgence now in the exploitation of prison labor by private companies like the Corrections Corporation of America, subcontracting with the states. (Workers World, Oct. 25, 2001)

"Competitive prison labor" means that companies like Starbucks, Microsoft, Victoria's Secret and Boeing make profits off the labor of prisoners who are mostly people of color. In Tennessee, for instance, a CCA prison is allowed to pay prisoners a "maximum" of 50 cents an hour. (Workers World, November 18, 1999)

When we consider the implications of the Reconstruction period in the United States for the reparations struggle today, we can demand in addition to reparations for the losses of African American people under slavery:

- Reparations for wages lost to freed Black people because they were forced into virtual peonage through the use of the Black Codes.
- Reparations for the sale of the crops raised under sharecropping and share tenancy, lost to landlords' inflated interest and lien credit, and reparations for the resulting equity and interest that was lost.
- Reparations for lost wages in urban areas, where Black workers were paid unequally in relation to white workers.
- Reparations for the education never given by the states, or given in unequal measure.
- Reparations for being held prisoner and worked on prison farms, roads, industries, mines, plantations.

Reparations—yes!

And more: Finish the unfinished revolution!! ♣

Sources: Encyclopedia of Southern Culture; The Unfinished Revolution: A Voice from Harper's Ferry, introduction by Vince Copeland; James Allen, "Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy 1865-1876"; W.E.B. DuBois, "Black Reconstruction in America, 1860s-1880s;" Jacqueline Jones, "Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present."

1906 Atlanta 'race riot' was a massacre

By Dianne Mathiowetz

Workers World, Oct. 2, 2006—Web edition

Did you know that Atlanta, the “city too busy to hate,” was once the site of a racist massacre that lasted four days, when mobs of thousands attacked, beat and slaughtered any Black person they saw on downtown streets, destroying businesses and homes at will?

It's true. Even most Atlantans aren't aware that when they walk down Peachtree Street, enter the 5 Points MARTA station or go to class at Georgia State University, they are in an area where, 100 years ago, as many as 10,000 white men were involved in a violent rampage of killing.

Today, the tens of thousands of people who pass by the statue of Henry Grady, located on Marietta Street just blocks from CNN Center, are probably oblivious to the fact that the bodies of three African American men were heaped in a bloody pile at the base of the monument, which is dedicated to the famous editor of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper who championed the idea of the “New South,” with Atlanta as its capital.

This year, from Sept. 21 to Sept. 24, a grassroots coalition of historians and scholars, high school and college students, community activists, artists, religious leaders and descendants of those who survived the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot organized a multifaceted program of education, discussion and cultural works designed to bring this grievous crime into the light.

In 1906, Atlanta was a bustling city of commerce and banking, transportation and manufacturing. According to the 1900 census, it had a population of 89,000, of whom about 35,000 were Black. By 1906, the city had grown to 115,000 with approximately 40 percent listed as Black.

Thousands of sharecroppers—Black and white—had come to the city to make a better living, looking for work in the mills and factories, railroads, hotels and offices. White working-class women were also getting jobs—a form of independence from traditional family structures. Most Black people worked in white-owned businesses or homes, but there was a thriving Black middle class based in educational institutions and in certain services, such as tailors, barbers, restaurateurs and the like.

One of the best-known Black entrepreneurs was Alonzo Herndon, who operated three barbershops that catered to white clientele. His shop on Peachtree Street, situated among some of the city's most exclusive hotels, featured crystal chandeliers and marble floors. He also founded the Atlanta Life Insurance Co. and was soon to become one of Atlanta's Black millionaires.

While segregation was practiced, the downtown area was a checkerboard of white and Black-owned businesses, operating side by side and competing for business. At-

lanta had a well-used trolley system in which whites were seated in the front and African Americans in the back, but in the middle of the car passengers stood shoulder to shoulder.

Change was occurring despite the strong ideology of white supremacy that operated daily.

Events leading up to massacre

In the summer of 1906, a strongly contested race for the governorship of Georgia took place. Hoke Smith, former owner of the evening paper, the Atlanta Journal, whose campaign manager was its editor, was battling in the Democratic primary against Clark Howell, the editor and principal owner of the morning paper, the Atlanta Constitution.

The main issue in the election was the disenfranchisement of the Black vote. Although the number of registered Black male voters was relatively small—about 28 percent of those eligible—the question of Black political power was a highly incendiary matter to the white population, which was anxious about its changed circumstances and was being bombarded with inflammatory and fallacious accounts of a “Black crime wave,” with particular emphasis on claims of insults and assaults on white women.

Common racist terminology referred to suspects as “fiends” and “Black devils.” There were two additional newspapers, the Atlanta Evening News and the Georgian, that were even more rabid in their “news” coverage, with sensational headlines of rape and equally gory details of lynchings and castrations.

These papers editorialized in support of vigilantes who would “protect white womanhood” and proposed the re-establishment of the Ku Klux Klan. On Friday, Sept. 20, 1906, the Atlanta Evening News printed an editorial declaring, “It is time to act, men.” Posters were put up along Marietta Street the next morning announcing the Klan was going to take action.

Throughout the morning and into the afternoon, thousands of white men and boys gathered downtown, waiting, talking, drinking. The newspapers printed special editions throughout the day, with more outrageous stories of “Black debauchery” stirring up ever more racist animosity.

Finally, a man climbed onto a box in front of the luxurious Kimball House Hotel, waving a copy of one of the papers and shouting, “The time to strike back is now.” With that signal, as many as 10,000 vigilantes poured through the downtown streets and pursued any African American they saw.

The Herndon barbershop was vandalized and destroyed. The barber who worked in the Kimball House lobby was killed on the spot. Trolley cars were stopped, their Black passengers pulled out of the windows and doors to be beaten, stabbed and killed. Men



French title of this scene in Atlanta is 'U.S. lynchings.'

were thrown off bridges onto the railroad tracks or hung from lampposts, their bodies riddled with bullets.

The mayhem continued in the residential neighborhoods near downtown and as far as East Point—home of the Atlanta airport today—and Lakewood over the next three days.

As word of the mob violence spread, some Black communities that organized resistance with butcher knives, pitchforks and Civil War-era muskets were able to fend off the marauders. Although laws had been passed some months earlier prohibiting the sale of guns and ammunition to African Americans, pistols and rifles were to be found in Black homes.

Police got word that Brownsville, a neighborhood south of the city that was home to a mix of middle- and working-class Black families, was heavily armed. When they stormed into Brownsville, a white policeman—Jim Heard—was killed along with an unknown number of community members. It took three companies of Georgia militia to subdue the area. Hundreds of men were arrested; 60 were charged with the death of the policeman. Brownsville resident Alexander Walker was eventually convicted of killing Heard and sentenced to life in prison.

No member of the white mob, police or militia was ever charged in any of the many deliberate murders and maimings of Black Atlantans.

After four days of racist terror, one of the papers declared, “It’s time to go back to work.” As many Black families quietly buried their dead and tended to the wounded, afraid of further reprisals, hundreds if not thousands left Atlanta, never to return.

The official number of those killed is 11 or maybe 12, since a white woman died from a heart attack while watching the violence from her porch. The actual number is at a minimum 25, and may have really been as high as a few hundred.

Nevertheless, within days, the Atlanta Journal proclaimed, “Atlanta is herself again; business activity restored and the riot is forgotten.”

One of those who left was Walter White, 13 years old, who on Sept. 21 had been downtown with his father, who worked at the U.S. Post Office, and witnessed the brutal murder of a disabled shoeshine child by the mob. Forever altered by what he had experienced, White went on to become the head of the NAACP.

W.E.B. DuBois, the renowned scholar, taught at Atlanta University. Although he was not in the city during the riot, he analyzed it in future writings. His poem, “The Litany of Atlanta,” evokes the horror of the massacre with these words, “Red was the midnight; clang, crack and cry of death and fury filled the air”

The news of the Atlanta Race Riot was carried in papers across the country and in Europe, much to the consternation of the business elite, who saw the profit to be made in a pacified and docile workforce, whether Black or white. Recognizing that they had a public relations nightmare that had to be effectively managed, they shortly convened the “Committee of Ten,” whose mission would be to smooth over the matter.

James English—a Confederate veteran, former city mayor and president of the

Fourth National Bank—was named chair of the committee. A select handful of Black leaders were invited to attend one of its meetings at his bank offices, where a program of “cooperation” was laid out. This method of behind-closed-doors deals, which gave a small voice in civic affairs to upper-class Blacks, became known as the “Atlanta way of doing things.”

Decades later this approach was credited with preventing large-scale violence in Atlanta during the tumultuous days of desegregation and the civil rights movement.

Jesse Max Barber was an associate of DuBois and editor of *The Voice of the Negro*, an Atlanta journal. Outraged by the success of the Committee of Ten’s shifting of the blame for the riot to the “Black crime wave,” Barber wrote a detailed article rebutting every lie and exaggeration. It was printed in the *New York World*. He concluded, “The cause of this riot: Sensational newspapers and unscrupulous politicians. The remedy: An impartial enforcement of the laws of the land. The authorities must protect all the people.”

Even though the article was signed “A Colored Citizen,” English summoned Barber to his office and demanded he swear that he was not the author, under threat of arrest if he refused to do so. Barber left Atlanta and continued writing in the North.

Legacy of racism remains

Hoke Smith won the governor’s race and laws were passed marginalizing the Black vote. By 1910, the ratio of registered African American voters had dropped to just 4.3 percent. The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot strengthened segregation, hardening the physical divisions between the races with clearly defined business and residential areas. Black businesses rebuilt further south on Auburn Avenue. German homeowners sold their property and left the neighborhood. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s grandfather bought his birth home in such a transaction.

The result of this racial division remains today. The white downtown business community has steadfastly fought to maintain control of the Peachtree corridor, all the while presenting an image of racial harmony.

In 1941, a modern version of the Committee of Ten—the Central Atlanta Improvement Association—initiated a program it openly called “Negro removal.” In the succeeding decades, at least 100,000 Black people’s homes were torn down to make way for interstate highways, sports stadiums and other “improvements.”

In 1996, while Atlanta was being marketed as “the capital of the Civil Rights movement” in order to win hosting of the Olympics, the drive to eliminate public housing from the inner core of the city took on steam. Quality-of-life ordinances were passed by the City Council to criminalize the poor and prevent them from appearing on downtown streets.

Within the last year, Central Atlanta Progress—the latest reincarnation of white business domination—demanded the creation of a “Tourist Triangle,” an area in which the act of asking for any kind of assistance would be illegal. On the very same streets

that ran red with the blood of Black men in 1906, their descendants—if they look poor, sit too long on a park bench or ask for help—can be arrested and jailed.

Tens of thousands of Atlantans, Black and white, witnessed the atrocities of 1906. It's difficult to understand how such an event could be buried, stricken from public memory.

Yet just over a year ago, a natural disaster in the Gulf Coast states was met with racist indifference and neglect, bureaucratic incompetence and state-sponsored violence. Innocent lives were lost; families were scattered all over the country; property was destroyed and seized.

The images of thousands of people—the majority Black—stranded on rooftops, abandoned at the Coliseum and Convention Center in New Orleans, forced at gunpoint to stay on bridges with no water or food for days, were seen by millions. But one would have to search hard to find ongoing coverage of the situation today of the displaced, homeless or unemployed residents of the Gulf Coast.

From the White House to the media outlets, the spin is “everything is under control” and “progress is being made.” And if there are problems, the fault belongs to the survivors, who aren’t “moving on with their lives.”

The members of the Coalition to Remember the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot are not content to just resurrect a forgotten piece of history. They strive to bring about restorative justice and reparations, a reassessment of political power and decision-making, and the reconciliation of a broken community. ♣

For more information about the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot, including a bibliography of books, articles, audio and visual tapes of the various programs, a school curriculum and more, please go to 1906atlantaraceriot.org. Very helpful background and analysis was also found in copies of *Hospitality*, the monthly newsletter of the Open Door Community at opendoorcommunity.org.

U.S. ‘ethnic cleansing’ The 1921 Tulsa massacre

By Monica Moorehead
Workers World, June 10, 1999

The main argument for the U.S./NATO bombing of Yugoslavia supplied by President Bill Clinton, the Pentagon generals and the big-business media is the alleged “ethnic cleansing” of Albanians in Kosovo. This can only be stopped if the United States and NATO intervene, say NBC, CBS and ABC.

NBC, of course, is owned by one of the biggest Pentagon contractors, General Electric.

But the U.S. government has never cared about the plight of any oppressed grouping. Its policy is to pit one oppressed group against the other to secure its brutal class rule.

A specific incident in U.S. history that exposes the hypocritical nature of the racist, imperialist U.S. government—and is rarely talked about—took place in Tulsa, Okla., in 1921.

Brief Overview of Racist Oppression and Heroic Resistance

53

Moorehead, Monica (Editor). *Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle*.

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Before the righteous rebellions of the oppressed Black masses in Watts, Newark, Detroit and elsewhere in the late 1960s, there was the "Tulsa Race Riot of 1921."

Never heard of it? A lot of people have not.

Investigations begun in 1997 concluded that this "riot" could more appropriately be described as a massacre. Mass graves of at least 300 Black victims of racist violence have been uncovered, according to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission.

The official report had stated that 36 people died. Yet many historians now say that more Black people were killed in Tulsa than in any other recorded "riot" in U.S. history. Excavations of the grave site will begin this summer.



Homes in the Black communities of Tulsa were burned to the ground.

Racist & economic roots

What was the root cause of this terrible massacre?

Millions of Black people were forced to leave the South at the turn of the 20th century to escape the savage lynchings, wretched poverty and other remnants of slavery. Thousands of Black people migrated to Tulsa.

Oil had been discovered throughout the Southwest, a region once known as "Indian Territory" that had been a part of Mexico. Glenn Pool, 14 miles from Tulsa, became known as the "richest small oilfield in the world." By 1907, Oklahoma had become the center of the country's oil production, producing 300,000 barrels a day.

Black Tulsans were trying to take advantage of this economic boom by establishing their own businesses in the Greenwood area.

Tulsa was an extremely segregated city. Black people were forced to live on the north side of town. Whites lived in the southern part. Black people were prohibited from doing business with whites.

The educator Booker T. Washington characterized the Greenwood section as the "Negro's Wall Street." Racists referred to Greenwood as "Little Africa."

The people of Greenwood were attempting to carry out their own brand of post-Civil War Reconstruction.

Greenwood included a Black newspaper, two doctors, a Black labor union, three grocery stores and barbers. Three-quarters of the Black children attended the lone Black school. Tulsa had the second-lowest Black illiteracy rate of any county in Oklahoma.

Many other Black people were forced to work in the white areas as domestics or shining shoes. This was a testament to the fact that whites still dominated the overall economy.

The white political establishment attempted to whip up a hysteria against the organizing efforts of the Industrial Workers of the World and against Jewish people.

The predominantly white police force forged a relationship with the Ku Klux Klan and other white vigilantes.

Reminiscent of apartheid

On May 30, 1921, Dick Rowland, a young Black shoeshine man, was falsely accused of accosting a white woman in an elevator shaft. He was arrested immediately.

The next day the Tulsa Tribune ran an editorial entitled "To Lynch a Negro Tonight."

A white mob numbering 2,000 gathered outside the jail in an attempt to lynch Rowland. A heroic group of 50 to 75 armed Black men, dressed in their World War I Army fatigues, confronted the racists. As a white man tried to physically disarm a Black man, a shot was fired. The Black men

fired back in self-defense. But they were overwhelmed by the armed mob of racists.

For the next several days, gangs of armed whites went into the Greenwood section setting fire to homes and businesses and shooting every Black person in sight. Dr. A. C. Jackson, one of the top surgeons in the country, was murdered after surrendering himself to a group of whites. The racists also went into their own white neighborhoods searching for Black domestic workers.

The Chicago Defender reported that Black neighborhoods in Tulsa were bombed from the air by a private plane equipped with dynamite. Other reports said the police had commandeered private planes to fly over the area. This is the first report in history of airplanes being used to drop explosives.

On June 1, some 6,000 Black Tulsans, including children, were rounded up and imprisoned by the racists. Reminiscent of apartheid South Africa, Black people who were not imprisoned or interned were forced to carry green badges saying "Police Protection."

In the meantime, whites were given a free reign to continue their looting and rampage of Greenwood without interference from the police or the National Guard.

Once the internment was over, a thousand Black Tulsans were dislocated and forced to spend the winter in tents and board shacks. The city was not legally obligated to restore the houses and businesses of Greenwood.

Not one white person was ever arrested for taking part in this racist attack. The young white woman who Rowland supposedly attacked never pressed any charges against him. He was eventually released from jail.



From Tulsa periodical of the time.
Below: African American detainees being led by armed guard.



The truth about the Tulsa massacre should be publicly exposed. And the U.S. government should be made to pay reparations to the Black people of Tulsa and to all the living descendents of slaves.

And not only should the United States immediately stop its bombing of Yugoslavia—but the United States and NATO should be held responsible for paying reparations to the Yugoslav masses. ♣

Material for this article taken from "Death in a Promised Land—The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921" by Scott Ellsworth (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982)

1921 racist terror in Tulsa Black survivors demand reparations

By Monica Moorehead
Workers World, March 16, 2005



"The morning that the riot started we heard the shooting... just a couple of blocks from the end of Greenwood on Archer. After we heard the shooting, I came to... Jackson's Funeral Home. It was also right on the end of Greenwood, a few doors down. He (Samuel Jackson) had not been long purchasing a new ambulance... we went to the undertaker... one of the young men that drove during the funeral sessions was also going out to the garage to get the ambulance. There was a old mill right across the tracks, right on Greenwood. You could look out of the mill, they could look right over and see us. While the boy was trying to unlock the door to get the ambulance... somebody white shot out... They were up in that mill which was probably four or five stories high, and they shot out of that mill and hit the boy on the hand... Blood shot out his hand. I'm standing right behind him. He dropped the keys and we ran to the back part of the funeral home by the dead folk."

—Otis Clark www.tulsa-reparations.org

The year was 1921. The place was Oklahoma. And the incident—the Tulsa race riot. This event got next to no notice when it happened almost 84 years ago, but for the survivors, like 102-year-old Clark, it's like it happened yesterday.

On May 31, 1921, racist whites carried out a brutal attack against what was then known as "Black Wall Street," a segregated section of Tulsa where the Black population established prosperous businesses. These racists killed and maimed hundreds if not thousands of Black women, men and children, and burned almost all of their businesses and homes to the ground.

None of the survivors received any kind of apology, compensation or any public recognition that this massacre happened.

It was 80 years later that the Oklahoma State Legislature offered an official apology to the survivors based on a three-year study on the massacre performed by a Tulsa Race Riot Commission that began in 1997.

Lawyers, law students, members of the Congressional Black Caucus, survivors of the massacre and other supporters held a news conference and rally March 9 on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., to file a petition with the court to demand long overdue reparations denied to the survivors in the lower courts. Those in attendance included Clark, historian John Hope Franklin and U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters.

A federal district court dismissed the Oklahoma lawsuit in 2004, stating that the incident happened too long ago for compensation to be granted.

Odinga Harrington from the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America told why she attended the rally. "Reparations are long overdue for the victims of the Tulsa riots, and reparations are long overdue for the descendants of slaves throughout the country." (Amsterdam News) ♻

50th anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education 'The stony road we trod'

By Dorothea Peacock

From a talk at a Workers World Party meeting in Boston, May 5, 2004

The road I'm taking for discussion is the highway to education. The vehicle I'm using to travel along this highway is Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kan., the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in the public schools in the U.S.

May 17 marks the 50th anniversary of the decision. How did the separate but equal doctrine come about?

1896 had marked the passing of the Reconstruction era and the return of the pro-slavery government to the Southern states. States' laws were again adopted reminiscent of Black Codes which had been passed right after the Civil War to keep Black people in their "place."

The laws established, enforced by criminal penalties, were based on racial segregation under which members of the Black and white races were required to be separated in facilities including separate schools, parks, waiting rooms, bus and railroad accommodations. Where completely separate facilities proved later on not to be feasible, as in dining cars or passenger coaches, a curtained partition served to separate the races. A fine of \$25 or 20 days in jail was the penalty for sitting in the wrong compartment.

[Homer] Plessy, who was "one eighth" Black by [Louisiana law], refused to vacate a seat in the white compartment of a railway car and was arrested for violating the statute. [Years later] a Howard University student studying the Plessy vs. Ferguson ruling and application became disturbed by the use of this ruling toward education



and other unfair laws. This student changed his major the same day to study law and became attorney Oliver Hill, one of the civil-rights lawyers who argued the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case.

In April 1951 Barbara Johns, a senior at Robert Moton High School in Prince Edward County, Va., led her class on strike to procure better school facilities and publicize the deplorable conditions of the Black school. Had the superintendent complied or tried to make better accommodations, the strike wouldn't have escalated at the school, consisting of a small building which was overcrowded when opened in 1939. To correct this situation the county built a number of tar-paper shacks which had tin stove pipes running from room to room. These pathetic rooms were heated through the use of oil drums acting as stoves. Coal was then burned in the drums. During inclement weather the children changing classes were exposed to rain, mud, cold and ice as they made their way to shacks on campus.

It's understandable why on April 23, 1951 students sought help from the NAACP and the pastor of a local Baptist church. The students also had the help and support of their parents. A meeting was held at the Baptist church with NAACP leaders. After two weeks on strike the students were told that they had made their point and [should] discontinue striking. The leaders also informed the students and parents that from now on the NAACP would be seeking to overturn the *Plessy* [decision] and have the Supreme Court declare racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

This was the beginning of the presentation of separate desegregation lawsuits. Ten civil-rights lawyers argued those cases before nine white judges. The Supreme Court said go back and consolidate similar cases into one single case, which became the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case. [The other cases mentioned in Chief Justice Earl Warren's opinion of the court, besides the Virginia lawsuit, included *Cumming vs. County Board of Education*, *Gong Lum vs. Rice*, *Missouri ex rel. Gaines vs. Canada*, *Sipuel vs. Oklahoma*, *Sweatt vs. Painter* and *McLaurin vs. Oklahoma State Regents*.]

Fifty years after that decision the *Boston Globe* has stated that "Massachusetts is hyper-segregational beyond regional and national levels." A task force [was established] to discuss neighborhood schools and the quality of them. I was at a meeting among activists, students, parents, teachers, [Boston Schools] Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant, school committee and councilors. The theme of the meeting was neighborhood schools and what will make a quality school of your choice. Students were asking for tools which are necessary for an education. Parents, activists and friends sat for two hours poring over needs. The answer was, we have to take these issues to the review board—which will not be considered or take effect for a year and a half!

[A recent] *Workers World* editorial stated that "while winning formal, legal equality was a huge step forward, just like ending colonial rule, it did not end racist oppression any more than neocolonialism has ended the great gap between rich and poor nations. The problem still exists that a small class of super-rich capitalists run this country and the world. They need racism to stay on top just as they need every other

tool that divides the workers they exploit. Having advanced this far, however, Black people are in a much stronger position to not only participate in but play a leading role in the next phase of the struggle, which will be for genuine equality of all peoples based on a working-class redistribution of society's wealth—with affirmative action and reparations to eradicate the terrible inequalities inherited from the past."

Stony is the road we trod! ✿

Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the Watts Rebellion

By John Parker

South Los Angeles, Aug. 20, 2005

Aug. 11 was the 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion, or "riot," as the Los Angeles Times referred to it in reporting on a commemoration held here last week.

Conservatives and liberals in the media emphasize the violence and "looting" over and over again, and sparingly talk about the poverty preceding the rebellion. Rarely, if at all, is police brutality mentioned, nor the systematic economic oppression here in South L.A.

And what about war? In 1965, as again today, a U.S. war was hurting working and poor people at home and threatening the quality of life, especially in oppressed communities. And, like today, the corporate media and both conservative and liberal politicians refused to call for an immediate end to the Vietnam War, thus allowing its damage to compound year after year, especially for the most oppressed.

The Los Angeles Times, in reporting on the commemoration in Watts, was quick to point out individual cases of violence perpetrated by "rioters," yet failed to mention the killings and brutality committed by the police.

In fact, the Watts Rebellion was prompted by an act of violence by the LAPD. The Aug. 26, 1965, issue of Workers World newspaper carried a report from a community activist titled: "Report of Rebellion—Straight from the L.A. Battlefield." It gave a close and personal view of the events.

"Wednesday afternoon (Aug. 11): Two blood brothers got in their car and started to drive off. They were stopped within a block by a C.H.P. (California Highway Patrol man). The driver had left his license at home; some kids on the block ran back to the brothers' house, told their mother what had happened. She walked down to the scene and everything was cool. The C.H.P. was okay and was getting ready to let the brothers go back home when up drove some Los Angeles Police Department cops acting





1965 Watts, Calif.

like Gestapo troops.

"They threw one kid over the hood of their car very roughly (you know, spread eagle). Up to this point the mother was on the side of the cops, but when this happened to her son naturally she objected. Then they turned on her. When one of the cops kicked her, it was on. Brothers started coming off

rooftops and out of holes in the ground to get in on it...."

That type of humiliation and brutality by police was commonplace leading up to the rebellion; in this case it occurred once too often.

Not only was community violence small compared to police violence, but the economic destruction by the "looters" was minute compared to big business's attacks on the standard of living of Watts residents. At that time, according to the census count, they suffered the highest unemployment of all L.A. residents and the worst education and educational opportunities, as well as the highest rate of inadequate housing in all L.A. County.

Their communities had systematically been looted by the system and its wars.

Are the conditions that facilitated rebellion ripe now?

Repression, racism, poverty

In terms of police violence, here are some incidents in recent years:

- Maria Peña and her father, Jose Peña, were killed for no reason by the LAPD in Watts.
- L.A. sheriff's shot 150 rounds at an unarmed man in a Compton residential area; stray bullets flew into people's homes.
- 13-year-old Devin Brown, who was unarmed, was killed by an L.A. cop.
- Margaret Mitchell, a mentally ill homeless woman, was killed by L.A. police.
- Tyisha Miller was shot to death by L.A. police while sitting in her own car waiting for help to fix a flat tire.
- The most recent rebellion in L.A. was caused by the police beating of Rodney King, which was caught on videotape.
- Many more cases of police brutality happen on a daily basis in Watts but don't get videotaped.

What about economic racism against the community of Watts? The Greater Los Angeles United Way and Urban League have filed a report regarding the state of Black people in Los Angeles in 2005. Here are some of the findings:

Forty-four percent of Black high school students fail to graduate with their class in four years. Black people have the highest rate of homelessness and make up an estimated 30 percent or more of the county's homeless population. They have the highest overall death rate and receive longer prison sentences than other groups.

In terms of household income, Blacks have the lowest median household income—\$31,905, as compared to \$53,978 for whites. In terms of racist violence, although Blacks account for just 10 percent of the county's population, 56 percent of racial hate crimes target Blacks.

Like the editors of the Los Angeles Times, many liberals spend a lot of time blaming youth and crime within Watts for the lion's share of its problems. Even within Watts, some who have bought into this Reaganite logic blame welfare, which they say has made residents weak. What is presupposed in this blame is that changing the situation in Watts depends on whether Black people can change their destructive behavior. What they need to do, say these folks, is get political power by registering and voting.

Once again, what liberals and apologists for this system who use these patronizing and racist arguments refuse to see are the facts that belie any of their solutions.

In the report mentioned before, the Urban League and United Way analyzed what they called "civic engagement." Black people in Los Angeles received the highest score of all ethnic groupings measured, including whites. Thus, regarding representation in the county's top elective offices, Black people went up from just 1 percent in 1960 to 14 percent in 2004. In addition, Black people rated highest in voting, military service and "citizenship."

So, blaming Black people in Watts for voter apathy or lack of initiative in getting involved in legislative battles and politics is very misplaced.

One thing to note, however, is that these reports relied on census data, which does not take into account much of the immigrant population. This could worsen some of the results for Asian and Latin@ populations in L.A.

What caused the Watts Rebellion? Political and economic repression—which breeds state violence, more police and more brutality.

But, more importantly, what caused the Watts Rebellion was the courage of African American people here in the U.S. to fight back against repression. Since the rebellion, the people of Watts have been able to win some demands for hospitals and better educational opportunities that give at least temporary relief from the worst symptoms of this oppressive system. It is an inspiration to the world to "riot" against U.S. imperialist oppression, from Watts to Iraq. ♣

African Americans in the military The struggle against racism & war



Press conference announces New York City Council resolution against the Iraq war during Black History Month, Feb. 2003.

By Pat Chin

Workers World, Oct. 31, 2002

What is the potential for a Black GI resistance movement if the Bush administration goes ahead with its criminal war against Iraq?

Racism in the U.S. armed forces has long reflected institutionalized racism in society at large, which views people of African descent as inferior. Despite this stigma, however, Blacks in

the military have insisted on their democratic right to be treated equally, rather than being forced to serve in segregated units.

In Vietnam, thousands of Black soldiers rebelled against what they saw as an unjust war by a government that wielded racism like a club against their communities at home. Many agreed with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "The greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is the U.S. government."

Black people have always been an important part of the anti-war movement in the United States. Many African Americans and others of African descent staunchly oppose U.S. wars of aggression around the world and reject the notion that Black people should fight on behalf of a system that's responsible for slavery, Jim Crow and racist profiling.

Many also hold the view, shared by internationalists of all nationalities, that the U.S. military represents the interests of greedy, super-rich bosses and bankers, not of poor and working people.

Racism deeply rooted

The history of African Americans in the U.S. armed forces stretches back to the Civil War. Many believed that their participation in the war would win them basic democratic rights and respect. But despite the Emancipation Proclamation and later efforts to desegregate the armed forces, racism still remains deeply rooted.

During the Civil War, more than 180,000 joined the Union Army. Another 30,000 served in the Navy, and 200,000 worked on military support projects. Some 33,000 perished in the conflict. (www.louisdiggs.com/buffalo/history.htm)

Historian Howard Zinn writes, "When the Emancipation Proclamation was issued Jan. 1, 1863, it declared slaves free in those areas still fighting against the Union (which it listed very carefully), and said nothing about slaves behind Union lines." ("A People's History of the United States")

The Emancipation Proclamation, and the huge numbers of Blacks who joined the Union Army, gave the erroneous impression that the Civil War was being fought principally for Black freedom rather than the domination of the capitalist mode of production over the system of chattel slavery.

"The more whites had to sacrifice," explains Zinn, "the more resentment there was, particularly among poor whites in the North, who were drafted by a law that allowed the rich to buy their way out of the draft for \$300. And so the draft riots of 1863 took place, uprisings of angry whites in northern cities, their targets not the rich, far away, but the Blacks, near at hand."

From WWII to Vietnam

Although Blacks participated in every U.S. war since, they still were subjected to the worst kind of racism.

Some 200,000 fought in World War I. They faced racist death squads like the Ku Klux Klan upon their return home. They also went into combat in large numbers in World War II, even though the military continued to deny them access to adequate equipment and training.

This exposed the hypocrisy of the U.S. government, which was willing to let Black soldiers fight and die overseas while denying them full equality and reparations for hundreds of years of unpaid slave labor.

The armed forces were legally desegregated in 1948 by the Truman administration. But Black soldiers and commanders received little or no respect from white officers and they remained poorly trained and ill equipped. Black units were, in fact, expected to fail, and Truman's desegregation orders did little to change this racist mind-set.

Reform was forced, however, during the Korean War, when huge battlefield casualties exposed the unsound nature of a segregated army. The post-World-War-II vigor of the civil rights movement also brought about concessions.

Washington's bloody war against Vietnam—a heroic nation that successfully resisted U.S. colonial domination—coincided during the 1960s with a big upsurge in the Civil Rights movement and rebellions in the inner cities. There were also frequent acts of war resistance. Muhammad Ali's refusal to serve in the military had a big influence on Black, Latino and white youths.

The Black Panther Party influenced many drafted African American youths. Not only did the BPP oppose the war; its leadership offered to organize military units to fight alongside the Vietcong against the Pentagon. Some Black troops even defected to the side of the Vietnamese liberation forces.

The American Servicemen's Union defended 43 Black Marines from Fort Hood, Texas, who refused orders to go and repress anti-war protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

There were huge numbers of conscientious objectors, some of whom left the country to avoid service. In the United States, Blacks were among the hundreds of thou-

sands who took to the streets in numerous protests until the war was ended.

After the Vietnam War, anti-militarist sentiment was still so strong that the draft was ended.

Choice for youths: military or jail

An “economic draft” became widespread with the technological revolution of the late 1970s and 1980s, which led to widespread layoffs. This, coupled with deep cuts in social programs, forced many Black and Latino youths into the military, which promised a lot, including free education.

Meanwhile, the prison-industrial complex, with its captive workforce toiling for slave wages, began to mushroom.

For many Black and Latino youths, it's been either join the military or face prison. Blacks and Latinos, in fact, “make up 62 percent of the incarcerated population, though comprising only 25 percent of the national population.” (Human Rights Watch Report, Feb. 27, 2002)

Most youths don't join the military for “patriotic” reasons. This is even truer for oppressed youths, who have fewer opportunities than whites.

With the deepening instability of the capitalist economy, many young people of color feel even greater pressure to enlist in the military, where racism still exists and where they're trained to kill other poor people and/or be killed themselves.

History has shown that it's been mainly poor and working-class people—disproportionately Black and Latino youths—who become the casualties of war. Their role, in the long run, is to be killers or cannon fodder.

A whopping 75 percent of all African Americans and other military personnel of color “complain that they have experienced racially offensive behavior, and less than half expressed confidence that complaints of discrimination are thoroughly investigated, according to the largest survey of racial attitudes ever conducted within the armed forces,” reported the Washington Post of Nov. 23, 1999.

Furthermore: “Nearly 20 percent of Blacks and 13 percent of Hispanics in uniform reported that they had been given inferior assignments or evaluations because of racial bias. Only 4 percent of whites reported such treatment.”

This remains true despite Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell's ascendancy to the higher echelons of power, from whence “he would be put out to pasture,” to quote Harry Belafonte, should he not submit to the program of war and exploitation being foisted on the world by the racist and sexist capitalist class. Powell, along with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, serves them dutifully.

The anti-war movement, in alliance with supporters abroad, is uniquely positioned to stop George W. Bush's Pentagon war machine in the insane rush to dominate the world for super-profits.

Linking the anti-war movement with the struggle against racism is a powerful way to forge the unity that's needed to resist and disarm the military brass. ✎

IV. What Hurricane Katrina Exposed to the World

New Orleans in devastation, 2005.



Black leaders link issues to building united front

Workers World, New York, Oct. 25, 2005

On Oct. 22 in New York, the Workers World newspaper staff hosted an important forum called "Katrina, a challenge for the movement: Forging a united front between the Black liberation, workers' and anti-imperialist struggles." The forum attracted an overflowing multinational crowd of progressives and activists from New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Boston and other areas.

The panel featured prominent African American representatives based in New York, Raleigh, N.C., and New Orleans. These leaders talked about the issues of the day from anti-racist, pro-labor, pro-community and anti-war perspectives. The following are excerpts from each of the speakers' presentations. Go to www.workers.org/2005/us/oct22_podcast/ to hear and see the talks in their entirety.

Monica Moorehead,
Workers World newspaper staff

Workers World newspaper is hosting this forum because our weekly newspaper is very proud to have covered the ideas and



struggles of these speakers, especially those with the Million Worker March Movement. Having these leaders contribute to our newspaper has made our paper so much stronger in helping to provide political clarity to the movement and broader sectors of people in general.

We hope that this forum will play an important role in showing why it is critical to build this type of unity, especially in light of the Katrina disaster, which tore away any doubt that may have lingered that racism and poverty do exist inside the largest imperialist country. We hope that this forum will help bring a greater understanding of the relationship between unity and solidarity, and of the pivotal, strategic and genuine role that Black leadership must have when we talk about national liberation, fighting against war and for workers' rights.



Saladin Muhammad, *Chairperson, Black Workers for Justice in Raleigh, N.C.; Southern Region Coordinator of the Million Worker March Movement*

The U.S. government has become much more repressive since 9/11. The Black working class, therefore, does not feel strengthened by our membership in the trade union movement unless we are also organized as part of an African American liberation movement, which has historically been the catalyst for a broader democratic and anti-imperialist movement. The impact of this working-class crisis, particularly the failure of the trade unions as its most organized sector to defend the most oppressed and exploited sectors, has hastened the need and consciousness for a national Black united front.

The Millions More Movement demonstration that was organized by a national Black united front shows that the African American liberation movement is capable of building and anchoring a broad peoples' front against U.S. imperialism. The Black working class must become an organized sector of the national Black united front as it continues to develop leadership in a worker's fight-back movement that seeks to push forward and radically transform the U.S. trade union and workers' movement. The Million Worker March Movement was the only conscious and persistent effort to agitate for organized labor's participation in the Millions More Movement.

Malcolm Suber,

Katrina survivor from New Orleans; People's Hurricane Relief Fund

I have been in New Orleans for 27 years, leading many, many struggles of the working-class, oppressed African American nation there. I compare what happened to us in New Orleans to what happened to my ancestors when we were kidnapped and stolen from Africa. The method and means that they got us out was like us on the auction block once again. Men and women, mothers and children, sisters and brothers were split



up. When you got on the bus, you didn't know where you were going. They had officers with guns and soldiers with guns on the bus. You couldn't get off of the bus.

Many of us who have been active in New Orleans decided to pull together as a united front all of those who had been active in fighting on behalf of the working class and poor people of New Orleans. And we had a meeting a week after the storm, in Baton Rouge, where we began to talk about the necessity of building a movement with supporters around the country to allow our people to get back on their feet and to return home. We have to build an action to take on the inaction of the government, which has exposed itself.



Brenda Stokely, *Million Worker March Movement Eastern Region Co-coordinator; Co-convenor, New York City Labor Against War; Troops Out Now Coalition*

Workers World has presented all of us a critical opportunity to address a lot of questions that will not be addressed at the forum today. We will have to have an ongoing discussion. I started out being involved in the national liberation struggle

and tended towards revolutionary nationalism. Been a worker since I was 14, but not a conscious worker in terms of the labor movement. But at some point in my life, these two struggles converged together. I am an African American woman; I am oppressed here in the United States as part of an oppressed nation and I'm also part of the working class. These two struggles are entwined. I consider myself a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary nationalist.

We must never be misguided that our ultimate aim is to bring down the regime of this country, not only for ourselves but for people internationally. That's what they depend on us to do. If people are in agreement that we are in a prisonhouse of nations, then the question of rebuilding a united front is talking about building principled unity and solidarity based on an anti-imperialist agenda amongst all those nations.

Larry Holmes,

Workers World Party; Troops Out Now Coalition

We don't want to leave out the Latin@s, the Arabs, the Palestinians, all of the people from the Middle East and Asia, Native people—all who must come together because they have a common enemy in their struggle for liberation, and that is imperialism. The Gulf Coast has created an opportunity to revive, or at least strengthen in reaction to this development, the Black liberation movement. A new challenge for other sectors is to show that they understand that here is the time that you can solidarize yourself with the struggle of Black people for self-determination.



The struggle in the Gulf is a struggle for Black power. We must not let the struggle in the Gulf be secondary, be isolated because the bourgeoisie is literally trying to drown it. It is for us to make sure that the militant Black trade unionists and militant Black revolutionary communists who are also nationalists, and I maintain that there is no contradiction—that they are not isolated. We can support the front but we must not allow the most advanced elements to be isolated or marginalized.

Chris Silvera, *Million Worker March Movement Eastern Region*
Co-coordinator; President, Teamsters National Black Caucus



I believe that we need to build on the Millions More Movement, Million Worker March Movement and the Million Woman March. We should be having these every six months. You have to render the government inoperable. If on Monday morning, there were 5 million people in Washington, D.C., that locked it down and who said nobody is leaving until George W. Bush leaves, George would have to go—because the capitalists would demand that he leave, because business has to go on.

How do we ensure that people come back to their places, because there is also culture in New Orleans. If you aren't careful, New Orleans will become a museum where we heard about jazz instead of hearing jazz and all the influences of African people. We don't need a nuclear bomb. We don't need a dirty bomb. We simply need to organize the people. I believe in the people. I believe that people should have the opportunity to live with dignity, to retire with dignity.



Malik Rahim, *resident of Algiers neighborhood in*
New Orleans; Common Ground Collective

New Orleans came very close to being plunged into a race war that was perpetuated by an old way of thinking—a plantation way of thinking that fabricated the demonization of young African American males that are poor. Many were slaughtered and many are wasting away under the most brutal conditions. Over 2,000 African Americans are now incarcerated for looting.

Maybe over 100 were killed by either law enforcement or white vigilantes.

We have surrounding parishes like Jefferson Parish, our neighboring parish, that received very little damage as far as flooding is concerned, that had empty land that could have been used to house at least half of the people evacuated out of New Orleans. But the only thing they did was build bunkers on every major thoroughfare to make sure that no Black from New Orleans was allowed in that parish. That was the parish of David Duke. That was the same parish that denied Black doctors with medicines from entering Algiers.

Nellie Bailey,

Harlem Tenants Council; Troops Out Now Coalition

While the ruling class feasts on the misery of the poor and the have nots, we must not despair, because the conditions created in the wake of Katrina will create an opportunity for the left that has never existed before. We have activists from the South, we have people from the North, we have people calling for a regional and national plan to deal with what is happening with Blacks in New Orleans as a microcosm of what is happening with poor people throughout the nation. Let us seize this moment to forge a united political front of Blacks, of whites, of workers, of students. Now is the time.

No matter how you feel about the Nation of Islam or the Million More Movement, 1 million people came to Washington, D.C. You cannot ignore that. You can not diminish that. What are we going to do as the left to forge an agenda within that movement to build a working-class struggle?



LeiLani Dowell, *Fight Imperialism—Stand Together*

(FIST) youth group; Workers World newspaper staff

Dec. 1 grants us another opportunity to build the movement we've been talking about here today. With regards to youth, student walkouts are being organized, some spontaneously. About 100 youth are traveling here from the South to march on Wall Street on Dec. 1 for "educational purposes."

Youth have a special role to play in that movement. We face special attacks as well. They could call Black youth "looters" in New Orleans, but they sure did try to recruit them to the military once they got to the Houston Astrodome. I encourage everyone here to get involved in carrying today's dialogue forward and building the movement. ✎



Racism & poverty in the Delta

By Larry Hales

Workers World, Sept. 10, 2005

What is painfully obvious about Hurricane Katrina is not that the hurricane itself had any out-of-the-ordinary tendencies, but that regardless of the storm's category, the massive loss of life could have been averted.

Until it was far too late, the city, state and federal governments provided no means, didn't marshal the National



Guard, didn't use the many boats and city buses—some now under water—to move people out of the city. No planes were used to fly people out of danger before Louis Armstrong Airport was closed down on Aug. 27, two days before the hurricane hit the city.

It is not that the hurricane did not consume many other parts of the Gulf Coast. Some towns in Mississippi are virtually gone. However, what happened in New Orleans uncovers the verity of life under capitalism: that regardless of the great wealth of U.S. society and the fact that workers and the poor create that wealth, most are left to fend for themselves in times of need and crisis.

Many articles have been written saying that the city could not withstand any storm above a category 3. Yet efforts to reestablish the coastal marsh were spurned and woefully underfunded by billions of dollars; only \$375 million of a needed \$14 billion came through. The weakened levees were not strengthened. Forty-four percent of the budget for the New Orleans Corps of Engineers was slashed and \$30 million was cut from flood control.

Coupled with the National Guard being depleted due to the war in Iraq, and members of the Army Corps of Engineers—needed to work on the levees—also being sent to Iraq, the real aims of the capitalist class and the Bush administration become startlingly clear. It is more important to them to shore up their occupation of Iraq, to steal the Iraqi people's oil reserves, than it is to protect the people of New Orleans and the delta from a storm that years earlier had been predicted would level this region.

Without transportation, people were forced to line up at the Superdome, where they were searched and told they would need their own food and water. Many thousands were turned away and sent to schools or back to their homes.

Hurricane Katrina exposed the anarchy of the capitalist system, especially during times of great crisis, and the racism and callousness of the Bush administration. No one will soon forget that Bush remained on vacation while the category 5 storm churned in the Gulf. Neither will it be forgotten how the victims of the storm were blamed by high-ranking officials like FEMA head Michael Brown.

Race and class underlying factors

The Gulf Coast is predominantly Black. Therefore, much of the area hit by the hurricane was predominantly Black, along with poor white. Mississippi's average per capita income, at \$24,650, is the lowest of any state. Louisiana is ranked number 42 with \$27,581 and Alabama number 40 with \$27,795, compared to \$32,937 nationally. All three states have poverty rates higher than the national average.

Racism is inherent under capitalism and the legacy of racism in New Orleans has led to a predominantly Black city being ill prepared. Many of its residents are desperately poor; disproportionately jobless, underemployed and imprisoned; homeless and with a sub-par public education system. The jobs available are mainly low-paying, in the service industry.

Over 27 percent of the New Orleans population lives below the poverty line. Sixty-seven percent of the city is Black, and this population makes up the great majority of the poor—the ones left behind in every area of life. The homes that African Americans live in are mostly old or rundown tenements in the lower-lying areas of the city.

Another startling fact is that more than a third of the Black population lack automobiles. Both Gov. Kathleen Blanco and Mayor Ray Nagin decreed that those with the means to do so should evacuate the city before Katrina hit. Poor Black people did not have the means to leave on their own; they couldn't afford to own a car because of poverty or infirmity.

In the aftermath of the hurricane, Black people across the country have become incensed over the gross criminal negligence of all levels of government. The images of the poor, mostly Black, the elderly and children being ignored, dying slowly from hunger and dehydration, have been burned in people's minds. This may lead many to wonder or have doubts about the government's intent, but the statistics don't lie.

For decades, the local ruling class of New Orleans has re-segregated the city, destroying low-income housing to make way for expensive homes, townhouses and super retail stores in an area above sea-level.

The conspiracy is of the capitalists' making and is happening across the country. But in New Orleans it has been tragically revealed by Hurricane Katrina, for all the world to see. And with the destruction and the gruesome task of recovering thousands of dead bodies comes news that the unemployment rate for the hurricane-ravaged areas is to climb to 25 percent. Can the situation become devastatingly worse?

That is why the call to bring the troops home must be amplified—to stop the suffering and murder of the Iraqi people, to stop the loss of life of the many poor and oppressed sucked into the war machine by the poverty draft, and now so that the funds being consumed by the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan can go instead to rebuilding the Gulf Coast and New Orleans.

The 25 percent unemployment rate does not have to be. It won't be if no expense is spared and the people of the Gulf Coast are allowed to rebuild on their own terms and in their own interests. ♣



Hurricane Katrina survivors at memorial in Congo Square in New Orleans, Aug. 2006, honoring those who lost their lives in 2005.

Who are the real looters?

By LeiLani Dowell

Workers World, Sept. 5, 2005

Many government officials and much of the corporate media have focused their discussion and coverage of Hurricane Katrina on the so-called “looting” of storm-ravaged cities.

On Aug. 31, two photos published on the Yahoo News website caught the attention of web bloggers. In both, people are wading through chest-deep waters with food in their hands. One caption describes the young Black man shown as “looting a grocery store,” while the other describes the two white people as “finding bread and soda from a local grocery store.”



While Yahoo News was quick to offer the disclaimer that the photos were taken by two different photographers, who wrote the captions, the effect remained the same—the criminalization of Black youth.

Racism has always been a tool of the capitalist ruling class, wielded to keep the working class divided and to justify war, occupation and poverty. Now the state is using the racist view of Black people as “looters” to justify an outrageous lack of response on the part of the federal government to the needs of the most oppressed in the delta region—before and after the hurricane—as well as to force yet another occupation of troops onto a community of color.

The big-business government in Washington has looted the delta region for decades. It looted public services for poor people while giving huge tax breaks for Big Oil operations in the region.

To pay for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it looted money from levee repair and other infrastructure upgrades that could have prevented much of today’s death and destruction.

And then it looted the people a third time by completely ignoring their cries for help after the storm hit, failing to provide for evacuation, food, housing or clothing for the survivors until four days later, when many had already died and a health emergency had been called.

The right to survive

It is criminal that the media would even suggest that people whose only way to get food, water and clothing is from locked stores are “looters.” The U.S. government, in fact, should have immediately announced that the people had the right to take whatever they needed from the stores to survive.

In trying not to sound too harsh on those left with no resources, the media sometimes tries to differentiate between “good” looters—the ones who are only taking food—and the “bad” ones—those who take other goods from stores. This happens to include clothing, on most accounts, which is badly needed by people who’ve been wading and swimming through filthy water for almost a week. But even if people take things other than food and clothing, is that the real crime here? Given the long history of economic repression in the area, a history dating back to slavery, they’re entitled to a lot more than that in reparations for generations of suffering.

Yet the capitalist politicians, with the media as their faithful allies, use tales of “looting” and “lawlessness” to blame the victims of this disaster for the failure of the government to carry out its mandated responsibility to help the people of the region. It is the same reasoning given by Michael Brown, the much-criticized director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, who said that the death toll from the hurricane is “going to be attributable a lot to people who did not heed the advance warnings.”

This kind of blaming the victims is nothing new in the United States. After the terrible Johnstown, Pa., flood of 1889, a headline in the New York Herald blared “Drunken Hungarians, Dancing, Singing, Cursing and Fighting Amid the Ruins.” The Hungarians were the most recent immigrants of that time. After big storms in Galveston, Texas, in 1900 and a flooding of the Mississippi River in 1927 that inundated New Orleans, the scapegoats were Black people, many of whom were rounded up and transported to work camps. (“The Storm After the Storm,” New York Times, Sept. 1, 2005)

Today in New Orleans, police and military operations against looters have replaced rescue efforts in some areas. The Associated Press reported on Sept. 1 that “the number of officers called off the search-and-rescue mission [in order to go after looters] amounts to virtually the entire police force in New Orleans.”

The AP article then describes city officials using equipment taken from an Office Depot and says that “during a state of emergency, authorities have broad powers to take private supplies and buildings for their use.”

Why isn’t this entitlement given to the people, especially when the government fails to respond to a crisis?

It was the Toronto Star of Canada—not a U.S. newspaper—that put the issue of “looters” into perspective. It reported on Sept. 3 about what had happened before the arrival of food and water from the federal government, four long days after the hurricane struck: “Thousands of refugees lined the street outside [the New Orleans] convention center yesterday, weak, begging for help and accusing their government of leaving them here to die. Instead of their federal government stepping in, they said, they had been saved by looters who smashed windows of abandoned stores and distributed food and water to those left with nothing.”

The imperialists realize that immense anger is brewing in the region. It is the same type of righteous anger, maybe even more intense, that led to uprisings like the 1965 Watts rebellion and the 1992 Rodney King-related rebellion in Los Angeles.

In those instances, the code words “looting” and “riot” were used to downplay and even ignore the justified rage in poverty-stricken Black communities occupied by brutal, racist cops. Then as now, the images of “looters” were overwhelmingly of Black youth. The National Guard is sent in with tanks and guns drawn, then and now, to protect private property over human lives, but also to ensure that self-organization of the masses does not occur.

Anger over the racist policies of U.S. imperialism is not contained to the delta region. Across the country and the world, it has only intensified with each news account of the devastation. It is coupled with anger about the continued U.S. occupation of Iraq, which was brewing long before Katrina struck. ♣

‘21st century slave ship’

By Clarence Thomas and Chris Silvera

Workers World, Sept. 11, 2005

We were invited by the Millions More Movement, by Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan, as Million Worker March Movement representatives, to be part of a delegation that went to Houston. First, there was a visit to the George R. Brown Convention Center and then we took part in a town hall meeting. Texas has become the “home” to over 250,000 displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The delegation also included Minister Farrakhan, along with his chief of staff



Chris Silvera, Maria Farrakhan (Louis Farrakhan's daughter), and Clarence Thomas in Houston, Sept. 11, 2005.

Leonard Farrakhan Muhammad; Minister Robert Muhammad, Southwest regional representative of the Nation of Islam; Ben Chavis, CEO of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network; Willie F. Wilson, executive director of the Millions More March; economist and syndicated columnist Julianne Malveaux and Dr. Barbara Williamson-Skinner, national MMM conveners; Malik Zulu Shabazz, New Black Panther Party leader and MMM convener; Bob Law from the New York local organizing committee and Jim Jones, hip-hop artist.

We visited the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston where thousands of Gulf Coast evacuees, survivors and victims and internally displaced people were being warehoused.

The first thought that struck us was how much security there was at this facility that really prevents the public from being able to interact with those individuals who have been displaced. It would make sense for people in the community to be able to

Photo: Nation of Islam; Facing page photo: Chris Silvera

have access to those individuals around issues of providing them with housing, job prospects, to help contact individuals for them and bring them things they need.

But instead, the evacuees are locked down. Although they can leave to go outside, it's not that easy. Security was really, really heavy.

Our delegation was confronted by someone who called himself the head of the security force. He had no badge and no uniform. He didn't even seem to know what the Nation of Islam was and he wasn't ever aware of the discussions that went on between his superiors and the NOI, which is what he should have done first. There was no mistaking that we were an official group.

He was acting like a cowboy with an "I'm in charge here! You have to leave!" attitude. The important thing was that his demeanor exemplified a hostile attitude which was inappropriate relative to those individuals placed in that facility.

The predominant group in the convention center were Black folks. The whites were a very minute minority. And there was not a commensurate number of Blacks that were part of the support group, either. So we had the feeling that Black folks were being treated as though they were foreigners in their own country.

Reports of abuse

We did not visit the Astrodome, but we were told that it's like Motel 6 and the convention center is like the Hilton Hotel in terms of the quality of life there. If they're saying it's a better situation at the convention center then that convention center is nothing more than a slave ship for the 21st century on land.

People have no privacy. They're not being treated with dignity. People can't come in and out of there without going through security measures like you were going through a prison. But with all that security, there are reports of people being abused.

One of the things that people were trying to do is to carry on their lives with some degree of normalcy. One woman was braiding the hair of another woman and of a child so that they could keep their appearance up.

We actually spoke to people who had missing children. One woman had lost two small children, 5 years and 4 years old. For people going through such deep-seated trauma, you want to put them in the best situation.

Everyone we talked to was from New Orleans and 70 percent of the New Orleans population was Black. What happened to the other 30 percent? We asked, "Where is the white population from New Orleans?" The Black people answered, "They're in the hotels."

We met people, talked to them about what they're feeling; we exchanged phone



**Katrina survivors at
Houston's Convention
Center, Sept. 11, 2005.**

numbers and took pictures. One guy, Elwyn P. Hunter, said, "I am a union carpenter." Not just a carpenter, a union carpenter. So he recognizes that associating with a union gives him a level of stature.

People were very excited and very happy that Minister Farrakhan was there. He was hugging people. Men, women and children embraced him. They were inspired by him being there.

People were very critical of FEMA. Mosque 45 is running a clinic in Houston a couple of days a week that doesn't cost anything. So part of the problem that we saw there as we looked around was that below the radar, Black-led charity organizations are not being given adequate access to large resources. All the monies are going to the Red Cross. And all the people who have access to the inner cities are not receiving any help from all those millions of dollars that have been received.

'A wake-up call for Black America'

A national town hall meeting at the Power Center in Houston followed the visit to the convention center. About 700 to 1,000 people came. Erykah Badu, the hip-hop artist, was there and spoke. Evacuees from the convention center were taken to the meeting by bus, too.

The town hall meeting was dedicated to the hurricane victims, who spoke, without anyone telling them how much time they could talk, during the first two hours and 45 minutes. Town hall gatherings are usually forums where talking heads come to pontificate. This particular town hall gathering departed from the typical format where for the first time people had the chance to collectively share their experiences and ordeals before the world.

People stepped up to the microphone to tell their stories; some shouted in anger about how they were neglected by authorities as they tried to escape to safety. Others cried as they described their fear and frustration about having lost everything, going days without food and water and some even contemplating suicide.

Annette Addison, an evacuee quoted in the Houston Chronicle, said, "I feel a release just to be heard." She described how after the hurricane she and her sister waved and hollered for helicopters to rescue them but they "went on about their business." The Coast Guard wasn't rescuing them. Neighbors were. Another victim stated, "How can Bush take my tax dollars, send them to Iraq and not help us in New Orleans?"

Addison was struggling to get assistance to feed and clothe her four children and two nieces. She said she received a debit card from the Red Cross about five days ago, but the money has yet to show up in her account.

She's staying with her aunt, Maxine Jackson, a Houston resident who has taken 48 evacuees, some of them relatives, into her home.

Another highlight was the testimony from people describing the help that they received from a New Black Panther Party member who waded in the toxic waters and rescued them.

There was also a sense of hope expressed by some of the speakers, including Farrakhan, that despite the neglect from governmental agencies, material things are replaceable and that this experience can be used to come together to build a movement to deal with racism, class divisions and poverty in the U.S.

As a matter of fact, there is a sentiment among the Millions More March leadership that the devastation and catastrophe will create an environment to bring various organizations together in building a national movement.

The bridges are going to be built among people who didn't connect before, out of necessity, out of opportunity. In all crises like this there's always opportunity to build.

Minister Farrakhan rose to speak prior to his departure. One of the things that struck us was how humble he was in deferring to the survivors' need to speak first.

He described the response by the federal government, state and local officials as "a severe crime." After survivors across the board openly criticized the role of the Red Cross, Minister Farrakhan called for the accounting of funds to the Red Cross. He's said that Black leaders must demand that they open the books to show us where the money is going regarding the Gulf Coast survivors.

The Red Cross is not about to go into the 'hood—you need people who have been working in the 'hood since the so-called "good times" because that's who has the credibility. They are not receiving any help from the federal government, Red Cross or FEMA.

If \$10 billion was sent to the region, then why is everyone not in a hotel? That money should also be going to families who have adopted families made homeless by the hurricane and government neglect. These are people from the working class and can hardly make ends meet with their own existing families.

There is certainly a sentiment of how the Black community is going to have to be able to step forward and address many of these issues. We can't expect the Red Cross or FEMA to do that because not only are they corporatized, they are controlled by the government and are not sensitive to African American culture, traditions and customs.

After his presentation, Farrakhan asked for permission to leave early in order to meet with survivors in other parts of the Gulf Coast region.

We've got a plan!

One of the most important accomplishments of our visit was that the Million Worker March Movement came up with a list of demands for the Gulf Coast survivors, along with Saladin Muhammad's Sept. 5 statement on "Hurricane Katrina: The Black Nation's 9/11!" (see www.workers.org/2005/us/hurricane-0922/).

Some of the demands being proposed by the MWMM include:

- An immediate freeze and moratorium on awarding of all contracts until survivors of the Gulf Coast have input in those decisions.
- All people, especially those from New Orleans, have the right to return to the Gulf Coast region.

- Extended unemployment and emergency financial relief based on a living wage until people are returned to their homes and jobs.
- Employ the survivors at a living wage as required by the Davis-Bacon Act (1931) to work on clean-up and reconstruction of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, with the right to organize unions.
- Issue a massive bankruptcy executive order for Gulf Coast survivors, forgiving all debts of property lost or destroyed by the disaster.
- Immediately allow other countries to provide aid to the survivors where needed.

The MWMM presented this list of priorities to Congressional Black Caucus member Barbara Lee at her Northern California office on Sept. 14.

This disaster must not be turned into an excuse for urban removal. We demand that there be affordable housing commensurate with the loss, of equal value. People should be paying whatever rent they were paying before.

Hurricane Katrina forces us to deal with the whole question of self-determination and how national oppression pertains to the whole question of the class struggle. Because it's very clear from the images of what was seen on television in the aftermath that Black people are economically exploited and politically oppressed, that we lack access to organizations to be able to care for us because we're dependent on the government to do every damn thing.

Labor must be at the table!

Organized labor has been silent on all of this. They have not been saying, "This is an outrage!" They're not calling on the elected officials that they've endorsed to say, "This is an attack on labor!"

Once again it is absolutely clear from the manner in which labor has responded, in terms of the officialdom of labor, that they're primarily concerned with business unionism and not with how trade unions should be fighting for economic and social justice on behalf of the entire working class. That's the failure.

There were discussions today involving the NOI leadership and MWMM leadership regarding having Gulf Coast survivors speak at the Oct. 15 MWM rally and making it an event that launches a united front movement dealing with the hurricane crisis and beyond.

The Million Worker March calls for labor to be at the table with the community, with the survivors. As African American trade unionists who organized the MWM, we understand that labor needs to be part of the struggle of that legacy of fighting for economic and social justice for the working class. ♣

Clarence Thomas is an executive board member of the International Longshore Workers Union Local 10, co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement, and executive committee member of the Alameda County Central Labor Council. Chris Silvera is secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 808, chair of the Teamsters National Black Caucus, and a Million Worker March Movement Eastern Regional Co-convenor.

'Like a bomb was dropped in the region'



By Teresa Gutierrez

From a talk at a Troops Out Now Coalition anti-war conference in New York City on Sept. 10, 2005.

I've traveled to many places in Latin America, and to Iraq, but I have to say that the few days that Johnnie Stevens and I spent in Texas and Louisiana as part of the Troops Out Now Coalition and International Action Center delegation were probably the most profound and life-changing experiences I've had.

So I want to put my comments within the context of a challenge to the anti-war movement and progressives and activists, not only in this room but across the country, to take what we have to say here today and get the message out to the millions of people around this country who will need the analysis and perspective.

We don't want to give the impression that this is a definitive report from the Troops Out Now Coalition. And in fact when we set out to conduct a lot of interviews via video, we found that it was a little bit insensitive to pick up the camera every single time. We were not journalists. It was important to document, of course, but that wasn't what we were there for.

So I want to just give you a flavor of some of the interviews and the discussions. The discussions can't even begin to reflect the horrors and the turmoil that was sweeping the area.

I compared the tragedy of what happened there to some of my experiences in Latin America. It felt in some ways the same as when the U.S. dropped bombs in Panama, and in some ways it actually felt worse. This is obviously an anti-war issue because indeed a bomb was dropped in the region. It was not an actual bomb, but it was a bomb of negligence that has resulted in catastrophic conditions.

There are many homeless people who know exactly what we're talking about. Imagine that you have a roof over your head, and you have running water to bathe, wash your hair, brush your teeth. The home may be poor or not, maybe it's a nice house, maybe it's not, maybe it's an apartment or you live in a housing project. But you have something; there's a community.

And then all of a sudden, almost overnight, that is lost. The natural disaster of the hurricane was bad enough—but it was intensified because of the neglect, and because of the damage to the environment.

What was not natural is that money was stolen from the levee for other priorities and that caused the break. What was not natural was how the government handled the crisis. It was an evacuation that if you had a credit card, a car and money to buy gas, you could do so. But if you didn't, then you had what you see now.

The government made a decision from the highest levels to the lowest levels to let

that tragedy happen. And so the folks that we talked to, in addition to being stunned for losing their homes, are also stunned because there's a feeling that: Why were the buses waiting outside the region? Why weren't the buses coming in to pick us up?

Imagine then, this was one of the most shocking and moving things about all the interviews and all the people that we talked to. This feeling of: Could it really be that the government wanted us to die?

Some people were very conscious and very understanding of the role of the government historically. Others were not. So it was a very shocking experience. I'm not a psychologist, but I can guarantee you that every single person from this tragedy is going to need some major support, psychologically.

There was the story of a man who, as he was swimming away from his house, kept hearing this "thump, thump, thump." And he turned around and the thump was the body of someone who was floating into the second floor window of his house. And you know that this man will live forever with that "thump, thump, thump" in his head.

He goes to the Superdome in New Orleans and he sees the repression and that the National Guard was obviously not there to help people. He saw two youth, who were trying to break the soda water machine so they could get drinks out, shot to death right there. He said he heard a baby in a stroller crying and crying, and then it stopped crying and the little baby was dead.

These were just some of the shocks, and knowing that the government was allowing this.

Occupation, militarization of area

When we drove from Houston to New Orleans, there were caravans and caravans of military trucks.

And on a lot of the trucks, there were chalk messages written by the soldiers. One of them said, "We're going to kick butt in Louisiana." Another: "My mom told me not to hit women, but Katrina is one woman I'm going to beat." This is the kind of occupying, military mentality that they have.

When we went to the [Houston] Astrodome, everyone was, like I said, terrorized. In shock.

People told us these kinds of things. A bus came in to pick up only women to take them to another state. And the women, everyone, were saying, "Why only the women?" And the people were kind of afraid. So they refused to go in that bus.

We talked to a young man who lost his mother. He doesn't know why, because they showed up in the same area. But later they brought him to Houston and took his mother to Alabama.

That's one of the many, many, many examples. That measly, piddly \$2,000 that people are supposed to get—the ones that do get it—will probably go for a lot of people just to get their families back together.

A woman told us that they brought her to the Astrodome but she has a lot of family

in Baton Rouge. So in the bus she and several people were begging the military driver to please stop [in Baton Rouge]. And any other kind of system, a more humane, not profit-driven system, would have, yes, stopped the bus.

Another family drove several hours to come pick up their loved ones, evacuees, at the Astrodome and they arrived 15 minutes or half an hour before the so-called curfew at 11 p.m. And the guard told them, "Well everybody goes to bed at 11:00. You'll have to come back in the morning."

And one of the volunteers who told us about this said, "Are you kidding? There's 25,000 people there—all the lights are on. People don't go to sleep."

So it meant that the family had to pay for a motel that night, if they had the money. Or if they didn't, they had to sleep in their car.

Again an example of the repressive character of this occupation of the people who have gone through such horror in recent days.



People were arrested for distributing food to the starving survivors.

When they were giving out the \$2,000 pittance on Sept. 9, folks were lined up and somehow there was some disorder—folks got angry, impatient. And so they shut down the volunteer center, got everybody out and wouldn't let any volunteers go in. Forty-eight people, because of supposedly acting out, they didn't want to stand in line or whatever, were taken to jail. Another act of inhuman behavior. I mean how the hell are you supposed to act after days of starving, not having water?

Again, in another system, you would be patient, you would organize the work, you would understand this frustration. Instead they haul you off to the Houston jail.

Movement can push this back

I want to mention when we were in Lafayette we stopped at this truck stop and were handing out fliers for Sept. 12 protest by Katrina survivors and supporters. One of the people turned out to be a Latino and he had lost everything in New Orleans. And when he saw me and Johnnie together, he came up to us and he was hugging Johnnie, saying, "Black and Latino—we have to be together. Bush ordered that levy to fall because he wanted to kill the Black and Latin communities. We've got to stand together."

We hardly saw any Latinos. It may never be known how many undocumented workers died as a result of that hurricane. Because of the way that they live. We don't know their names.

We have heard that the immigration officers were sending INS officers to the Louisiana-Mississippi region and you know that they are not going there to help the

undocumented or immigrants. They're going there to find the ones they can find and they'll probably be deported.

We should turn the Sept. 16 events that were called to protest the Minutemen into events in solidarity with the Black community, because of the racism of this tragedy towards the immigrants of the Gulf Coast and towards all oppressed immigrants.

We arrived in Camp Casey—as you know Camp Casey is the Cindy Sheehan movement. And they were doing great work. And so many of the people at Camp Casey, anti-war activists who were all white, most of them were so sure what this was all about. And there was all this discussion that it was an ethnic cleansing, about the redevelopment is going to be to push out the poor and Black community of New Orleans. They were very clear and very angry.

So we left around 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning on what should have been a trip of an hour and a half to get to Algiers, La. By 6 p.m. that evening we were still not able to arrive.



One of the many condemned houses in New Orleans' 9th Ward.

The main problem was the troops at the major stations. They would just close all the streets and when we would ask for directions they were like, well the hell with you, just get going, and started picking up their guns. It was that kind of climate. So it took us forever and finally we couldn't get through. You couldn't make a phone call. You couldn't get phone calls.

What I want to close up with is that when we were in the car for all those

hours, nothing was said on the radio stations about how the U.S. government had allowed the Black community, the poor community, the immigrant community of this region to be wiped out overnight.

And so it's the challenge of the anti-war and progressive movement, of all of us who think the way we do, to never get the issue off the front pages. To make sure that we document the truth about what really happened there. That we find all the folks who want to struggle.

Because what is happening right here today is like what happened in the Trail of Tears of the Native American population. That kind of displacement.

But this is not the 1800s. This is 2005 and the level of consciousness of the movement can push this back. We can expose what is really happening in New Orleans and Louisiana today. And this should be the beginning of the decline of this government and this system that has allowed this tragedy to happen. And we have to make this the number-one task of the movement: never to forget what happened in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast.

We must never forget and allow the government to be off the hook. ✿

Katrina survivors deserve reparations

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, Oct. 13, 2005—Web edition

The Oct. 15 rally of the Millions More Movement, with its focus on the Gulf Coast crisis, could not have come at a more opportune time in the U.S. This mass gathering will, no doubt, help to shine a humongous spotlight on the central issues of racism, national oppression and poverty, especially in light of Hurricane Katrina.

The winds and flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina did more than physically destroy countless lives and homes throughout the Delta region, including in Biloxi, Miss., Mobile, Ala., and especially New Orleans. Millions of people here and worldwide were deeply horrified to see the insensitive manner in which the Bush administration as well as local and state officials left tens of thousands of poor people, the vast majority of them Black, to suffer and die needlessly during and after Katrina hit, especially in New Orleans.

No other single event in recent U.S. history has more forcefully unmasked the heinous reality that national oppression, a devastating combination of white supremacy and poverty that impacts people of color disproportionately, does exist inside the wealthiest, most powerful, imperialist country in the world. This is what really lies beneath the collective negligence of those in power.

The Katrina crisis helped to expose for so many just who are the haves and have-nots in society. Katrina showed that the have-nots are not just individuals in the ones or twos, or even in the hundreds or thousands, but in the millions. Not only are the have-nots the poor—officially 37 million people who live in poverty and extreme poverty—but many are African American, Latin@, Arab, Asian and Indigenous, out of proportion to their numbers in the overall population.

And sitting on top of the have-nots are those who own and control everything in society, those consumed with capitalist greed—the ruling class. They are the Fortune 500 CEOs—an exclusive club of multi-millionaires and billionaires, mostly white, straight males who worship making profits, not serving human needs. And those who occupy the White House, the U.S. military hierarchy and other seats of power are willing servants for the ruling class.

For African-Americans, Latin@s and other people of color, enduring racist oppression in its overt and covert forms has become a fact of life for many generations. The videotaped brutal beating of Robert Davis, a 64-year-old African American retired teacher, by racist New Orleans cops is an all too familiar reminder that racism is, as the old saying goes, “as American as apple pie.”

The White House and the profit-hungry corporations they represent have made it clear through their actions that Black people, immigrants and the poor, including whites, will not be welcome back to New Orleans. Thanks to their hostility towards

the poor and Black people, they want to use the Katrina tragedy to transform New Orleans into a playground for mainly affluent whites. That *cannot* be allowed to happen. In fact, many Black activists from around the country, especially in the South, have quickly come together to say no to this racist gentrification plan.

Grassroots redevelopment plan needed

These Black activists, including leaders of Black Workers for Justice, Million Worker March Movement, Community Labor United, Millions More Movement, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, December 12th Movement and many others have collectively set up the People's Hurricane Relief Fund as a vehicle for establishing solidarity committees nationwide to build a united front to win real justice for the Katrina survivors.

What kind of justice for the survivors? Justice that includes the right of Black Katrina survivors to return to their respective homes and to rebuild their communities in any fashion that they want; the right to a decent and guaranteed income provided by state and federal governments; the right to a living wage including upholding the prevailing wage laws under the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act; the right to decent housing, not the substandard housing that many of the Katrina survivors had before the hurricane even hit; the right to control reconstruction funds to rebuild their communities, not for no-bid Halliburton contracts; the end to martial law including police terror and the right to decent health care and education.

All these demands and more encompass the fundamental right to self-determination and reparations that have been systematically denied to African Americans since the days of slavery and the overthrow of Reconstruction following the Civil War. Some of these organizers and their supporters have called for a national conference of Katrina survivors on Dec. 9 in Jackson, Miss., and a national march in New Orleans to raise the right of return for these evacuees.

All of these demands would be justified even if it weren't for the Katrina crisis, but this crisis has helped to galvanize the Black movement in a such way not seen since the 1960s. These Black forces need and deserve the full support and solidarity of broader progressive forces and are starting to get it.

The Troops Out Now Coalition, with some of these Black forces, has helped to initiate a Dec. 1 nationwide day of absence—a day of no school, no work and no shopping—to shut down war, racism and poverty. That day marks the 50th anniversary of the arrest of Black seamstress Rosa Parks, who in 1955 refused to give up her seat to a white man on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Ala. Her heroic action not only sparked the Montgomery bus boycott but launched the modern-day Civil Rights movement.

Anti-war activists can play a strategic role in supporting the demands of the Black-led People's Hurricane Relief Fund by demanding that the hundreds of billions of dollars being spent on brutal wars and occupations against Iraq and Afghanistan instead go to provide human needs at home. ♣

V. Africa: A Battleground Against Colonialism & for Sovereignty



Detroiters protest the U.S. bombing of Somalia, Dec. 2006.



Nigerian women fight for the benefits from their petroleum.

Africa's debt crisis calls for reparations

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, July 15, 2005

The plight of Africa has recently received a great deal of worldwide attention, and rightfully so.

During the first weekend in July, Live Aid 8 concerts took place in various countries to help elevate mass consciousness on the grinding poverty and the HIV/AIDS crisis that afflict tens of millions of African people.

Artists such as Stevie Wonder, Will Smith, Madonna, Paul McCartney, U2's Bono and many others lent their talents to this worthy cause. The concerts were timed to occur right before the G-8 summit was to take place in a remote town in Scotland July 6-8.

G-8 refers to the richest capitalist countries—the United States, England, France, Italy, Canada, Germany and Japan—whose top leaders meet annually to discuss current economic and trade developments, and Russia, which also sits in at the meeting.

One of main topics of discussion was the debt crisis that has engulfed Africa for many decades. Official representatives of many African countries were invited to sit in on the proceedings.

Based on news reports, it's apparent that these African leaders had very little influence regarding the outcome of this summit. It was U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair who dominated the airwaves during the summit, and even more so after the July 7 bombings on the London subways.

There was a general agreement coming out of the summit that the debt of 18 out of the 54 African countries, considered the poorest on the continent, would be canceled. An increase of \$50 billion in aid over the next 10 years to Africa was also approved.

The roots of underdevelopment

Did this G-8 summit do justice by the African people? Will an additional \$5 billion for each of the next 10 years help to lift millions out of impoverishment and destitution? Will the cancellation of debt of one-third of the African countries help their devastated economies rebound? The answers to all these questions is: absolutely not!

The fact that Africa is both the richest continent in terms of resources and the poorest in terms of underdevelopment did not come about over a span of years or decades but centuries. Three of the G-8 members—Germany, France and England—expanded their capitalist economies with the African slave trade beginning in the middle of the 16th century. The United States became involved in the slave trade a century later. An estimated 40 million African people were stolen from their homeland during slavery.

Europe became the main colonizer of the entire African continent. The result was millions more lives lost and resources and land plundered from the late 19th century until African struggles brought about nominal independence in the 1960s and 1970s.

Today the greatest part of Africa is a neocolony under control of imperialist banks through the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Since the post-colonial period, whole African economies have been caught in a vicious cycle of bank loans and structural agreements that have plunged them into a spiraling debt they can never pay off in several lifetimes.

According to World Bank statistics, Africa spends an estimated \$15 billion annually on debt repayments but receives less than \$13 billion in aid during the same time frame. For every dollar that an African country receives in grants, it pays \$13 in interest on debt.

Africa's entire debt stands at \$300 billion. (Nepad Secretariat) To illustrate the tremendous gap between the haves and have-nots on a global scale, the richest 18 North Americans could pay off Africa's total debt with billions of dollars to spare. (Forbes Magazine, 2002)

This debt crisis has meant nothing but underdevelopment, poverty and misery, largely concentrated in the sub-Saharan region. African countries spend more on the debt than on providing health care, housing, food and education.

Thirty million Africans have been diagnosed with HIV, the great majority of them women. The African infant mortality rate is 92 per 1,000 live births.

Salih Booker, executive director of Africa Action, stated: "This G-8 plan is inadequate and a contemptuous response to African demands for justice. It is an unapologetic confirmation of the global apartheid system in which the most impoverished continent bankrolls the development of the rich world.

"Their announcement to increase aid to Africa is the greatest hoax of our time," Booker added. "While they trumpet minuscule increases in development assistance, they continue to extract billions of dollars a year in debt repayments from countries excluded from this diminutive debt deal." (blackamericaweb.com)

Reparations, not the free market

The G-8 leaders, especially Bush and Blair, have cried crocodile tears before the worldwide media regarding the situation in Africa. Their "solutions" for the African crisis—better governance and increased trade—show where their real interests lie: in increasing corporate profits.

African exports, from oil to textiles, are generally unable to compete with the imperialist countries, which can flood the worldwide capitalist market with cheaper goods and rich subsidies. Africa is in the dire situation that it is today because capitalism, a system that has to either expand or die, has denied it the right to develop.

Even if the debt were cancelled in all of the African countries, which should be done immediately, this would not automatically solve Africa's crisis of underdevelopment. Short-term solutions are needed to deal with the current suffering, like free, on-demand HIV/AIDS drugs, food, health-care workers and much more.

The African continent has been bled dry because of the devastating slave trade, colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism. Africa does not owe the banks one red cent. It should be the other way around—that is, the class of greedy bankers and bosses owe the African peoples billions if not trillions of dollars in reparations, especially providing state-of-the-art technology with no political or economic strings attached. ♣

Africa struggles to control its oil

By Donatien Bukuba

*From a talk at the Workers World National Fightback Conference
in New York, Nov. 14, 2004*

As the Iraqi people are fighting in the streets of Falluja for their sovereignty and independence from the U.S. imperialist grab for oil, we must also look at Africa.



This week a struggle broke out in Ivory Coast when France destroyed the small Ivoirian air force to the cheers of the U.S. The Ivoirian government charged France with supporting a rebel group.

A popular outpouring shut down Abidjan, the capital, and defensively surrounded the president's residence. Ivoirians acted to repel a feared overthrow of their president by the French army with the full support of Washington.

The outbreak of this crisis indicates another chapter of imperialist powers maneuvering to install a puppet regime temporarily more to their liking. Although Ivory Coast's main export is cocoa, it also has offshore oil and gas reserves and is located in oil-rich West Africa.

On Nov. 16, a planned general strike by Nigerian workers could stop all economic activity in that country, particularly targeting oil production. This strike will include all sectors. Nigeria's labor minister warned oil workers Nov. 8 not to join the strike or risk losing their jobs.

The strike is being called to reverse a 25-percent increase in fuel oil prices. It follows a successful four-day warning strike last month. Although the October strike asked people to stay home, the coalition of unions and community organizations is calling for demonstrations for the upcoming confrontation.

Only two years ago, hundreds of Nigerian women literally took over U.S.-owned ChevronTexaco refineries—stopping production of 1.8 million barrels of oil per day. They demanded that ChevronTexaco provide their communities with electricity, schools, water, health clinics, jobs, unemployment insurance and pensions.

Nigeria is the top producer of oil in Africa, the seventh-largest oil exporter in the world and the fifth-biggest source of U.S. imported oil. Its oil is extracted for the profit of Shell, ChevronTexaco, and ExxonMobil. U.S. imperialism's worst nightmare is that Nigeria could take control of its oil wealth and use it for the benefit of the people, like Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution.

Africa faces stepped-up intervention by U.S. imperialism as it seeks to elbow aside its junior partners in Europe. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. seemed content to play a more covert role in Africa—financing its pro-imperialist puppets in Congo while supporting the racist South African apartheid regime. Liberation struggles took center stage in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and elsewhere.

But once the Soviet Union was gone, U.S. intervention in Africa took a more direct form. In 1993, for the first time in recent memory, U.S. troops landed on the continent under the guise of providing food aid to Somalia. Of course, Somalia's strategic location at the Horn of Africa, the gateway to Middle East oil, had nothing to do with this—or so the imperialists said! The Somali people forced the U.S. to withdraw. But today Pentagon bases are being built in Uganda, Djibouti, Senegal, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

The African people need the solidarity of all progressive movements, especially in the imperialist countries, in their struggle for the right to control their own resources and economies. Shell Oil in Nigeria is the same Shell Oil appointed by the U.S. occupiers of Iraq to manage those stolen oil reserves.

Centuries of colonial and neocolonial plunder, including the kidnapping of millions of human beings in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, requires not only that the

U.S. and its junior imperialist partners get out of Africa now—it requires not only unconditional solidarity in action—it requires reparations. ♣

Congo, Africa & imperialism

Workers World Editorial, Oct. 30, 2003

The Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire, is one of the richest countries on the face of the earth in terms of mineral wealth. It is home to large reserves of tantalum, a very rare mineral that is essential in creating coltan. Coltan is essential to the high-tech needs of the electronics industry. Once processed into a powder to coat capacitors, its ability to hold an electric charge makes it indispensable in high-tech equipment including cellular phones, computers, jet engines, missiles and weapons systems. A major portion of the world's tantalum is found in Africa, of which 80 percent is located in the DRC's eastern region.

Despite all this abundance of wealth, the DRC has one of the world's poorest populations. While hundreds of millions of impoverished people, many in Africa, live on \$1 a day, according to United Nations statistics, the people of the DRC live on 25 cents a day. Since a civil war broke out in the DRC in 1998, an estimated 4 to 5 million Congolese have lost their lives. In 2001, the previous DRC president, Laurent Kabila, who spoke out against the IMF and World Bank's stranglehold on his country's economy, was assassinated.

Reports have recently appeared in the U.S. media expressing optimism that the war is over and peace is on the horizon, after an agreement three months ago to set up a transitional government in which the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo must share power with rebel groups. But the Congo government in Kinshasa disputes this, saying that foreign troops from Uganda and Rwanda, which backed the rebels, are moving back into the area.

What the media are not writing about is how this terrible war has served the interests of the imperialist-owned corporations that want to exploit the Congo.

One of those corporations is American Mineral Fields, a relatively small company originally based in Hope, Ark.—the hometown of Bill Clinton. It announced early in October that it was about to conclude an agreement with the Congo's state minerals agency, Gecamines, for the development of "what could become the world's biggest and lowest-cost cobalt project." (Reuters, Oct. 2) The Kolwezi project involves an estimated 800,000 pounds of cobalt and 3.7 million pounds of copper.

With the Congo government hard-pressed on all sides, the World Bank got Gecamines to revise its mining code. Tim Read, AMF's chief executive, told Reuters that "For the first time in 20 years the Congo is investable. The mining code brings a stable, transparent and robust legal and fiscal regime. It brings great confidence."

And why is the Congo now "investable"? Because the new mining code reduced the stake of Gecamines in this \$300-million project from 40 percent to just 12.5 percent.

No wonder that the share price of American Mineral Fields has doubled in the last few months.

The media, in writing about the devastation in the Congo, leave out the role that U.S. and European imperialist intervention have played in wreaking havoc upon its economic and political development since the end of the 19th century, when the Belgians first brutally colonized this country.

This past August, the deputy commander of U.S. forces in Europe, Gen. Charles Wald, went to the DRC accompanied by a U.S. military delegation of 20 members to join French and Belgian military forces there. The Pentagon, along with NATO, is planning to establish military facilities in areas in western, eastern and northern Africa, enabling the U.S. to rival its European allies for hegemony from Congo to Liberia to Zimbabwe.

The U.S. and other imperialists cloak their interventions in Africa as humanitarian efforts, but the hard economic facts show that for every penny of aid they give, they take out vast fortunes in stolen resources and labor.

The worldwide anti-war movement can assist the resistance of African peoples to the giant profiteering banks and corporations by connecting the struggle for reparations for Africa to the struggle against war and occupation. This will help strengthen international solidarity with working and oppressed peoples here and abroad. ✎



**Greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal
to all participants at the 3rd UN World Conference
Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia
& Related Intolerance**

Aug. 31,-Sept. 7, 2001, Durban, South Africa

Revolutionary and radical greetings to our many friends in Durban.

Ona move. Long live John Africa.

It is fitting that many of us gather in South Africa, fitting too, that many in attendance here hail from the United States. Those who have studied the issue of racism, and the phenomenon of white supremacy, find too many points of convergence between South Africa and the United States. Both nations claim heritages of democracy, but in fact they have long and tortured histories of what some have called "herrenvolk democracies," where whites have been granted a kind of egalitarianism, but non-whites were forced into social, economic and political subordination. We know that it didn't matter what was said on paper, or what government spokesmen said. A lived experience communicated the worth of white life and white property, while also communicating the worthlessness of Black and Indigenous life and liberty.

For millions of people of color in both these originally herrenvolk states, that message is reflected in our daily realities. And because a state has been forced to change its tune from its herrenvolk or white supremacist roots doesn't mean that all is now well. We remember the words of Kwame Nkrumah, who stated that political independence is illusory without economic independence. Who can question the wisdom of that observation when we look at the choking, numbing poverty among Blacks here in South Africa that continues under the new political dispensation?

Let us consider the historical role of the United States government during the years of apartheid from the 1970s, when there were the now-infamous Vorster/Kissinger conferences, Reagan's program of so-called constructive engagement with the Botha regime. And how many of us know that in the United Nations General Assembly, between 1978 and 1983, the United States voted at least 11 times against any action by the world body against apartheid? For example, in November 1983, the international community voted 110-1 for Resolution 38-19, an international convention on the suppression and punishment of the crime of apartheid. In all the world, guess which nation voted against the U.N. resolution? Only one—the United States.

The U.S. was the best friend the apartheid regime ever had. It has never met a dictator it didn't like. Is there any wonder now that it wants to demand that there be no discussion of slave reparations in Durban? The nation that held African people captive in chains and in human bondage, reduced to cattle in American law, for almost 300 years, and then forced them into subordination, segregation and subjection for another century under a Supreme Court approved lie of "separate but equal," that today supports a prison-industrial complex that cages more black men, women and juveniles per capita than South Africa during the Botha regime. In effect, a new slavery, accomplished by the systematic and illegal removal of Blacks from jury service, this new herrenvolk state forbids the world from the very discussion of slave reparations. Imagine that.

Well, I trust you—all of you—will do the right thing. Remember the sweet ancestors, those precious millions whose whitened bones formed underwater walkways across continents—those shackled sons and daughters of Africa, who prayed that death would bring them back home, away from a land of greed, spirit hunger and madness. You'll know whom to listen to. I thank you.

Ona move! Long live John Africa.

From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.



Today Africans throughout Europe and the U.S. fight for immigration rights.

On 100th anniversary of massacre Herero people demand reparations from Germany

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, Aug. 26, 2004

It is a well-established fact that Africa is considered the most economically underdeveloped continent. How is it that Africa is so abundant in natural resources, including oil, diamonds, magnesium, uranium, etc., and yet is the continent most indebted to the imperialist banks?

The answer lies in the horrendous period of colonialism that intensified during the late 19th century.

Colonialism, or the enslavement of African peoples within the borders of their homeland, was an outgrowth of the slave trade. The African continent was virtually sliced up like a pie as European capitalist countries such as France, England, Spain, Portugal, Germany and the Netherlands built their capitalist economies by stealing the lands and resources of the African masses.

The African people heroically tried to beat back the onslaught of invasions by the racist colonialists. But their weapons were no match for technologically advanced European weaponry like machine guns.

Just as tens of millions of African people were kidnapped and sold into slavery—that is, if they survived the horrific Middle Passage to the “New World”—millions more died attempting to defend their homelands from European colonialism.

One of the most bloody, genocidal chapters during the depths of the colonial period occurred almost a century ago in the country then called “South-West Africa,” today known as Namibia. Namibia, which borders South Africa, Angola and Botswana, was and still is considered to be one of the most mineral-rich countries in Africa.

During the 1880s, Namibia was brutally ruled by Germany. White farmers systematically took over the most arable lands from the indigenous Herero and Nama peoples. A similar process took place in Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, during the same period, with England being the colonizer there.

The Hereros organized a heroic guerrilla struggle against the invading German troops led by the fascistic General von Trotha.

On Oct. 2, 1904, von Trotha issued a proclamation ordering that the Herero people were to be exterminated either by machine gun or by poisoning their drinking water if they refused to leave their lands.

An estimated 65,000 out of 80,000 Hereros, including children, were massacred in Okakarara, along with 10,000 Namas. Hereros who were captured were either hung in massive numbers or driven into the desert to die.

Apartheid South Africa succeeded Germany as the colonizer of Namibia in 1918.

Namibia won its formal independence in 1990 under the leadership of an armed guerrilla movement, the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).

On Aug. 12, a ceremony was held at Okakarara to mark the anniversary of this crime against humanity. The current German development minister, Heide Marie Wiersma-Zeul, attended. While Zeul acknowledged that what happened to the Herero and Nama peoples was genocide, she refused to make a formal apology.

To add insult to injury, Zeul stated that the German government would not pay \$4 billion in reparations that are being demanded by the surviving Herero people for past colonial crimes. Zeul stated that because the "killings" happened so long ago, the reparations claim would not hold up in court.

Herero chief Kuaima Riruako countered: "We still have the right to take the German government to court." (BBC News, Aug. 14) ☸

LGBT Pride, Africa and the AIDS crisis

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Workers World, June 8, 2005

June is a whirlwind of Pride activities in the United States as lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people commemorate the beginning of their liberation movement, the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion in New York City. Prominent among the Pride events, from San Francisco to Boston, are the annual AIDS walks. These mark the continuing struggle against the deadly AIDS virus, which was first reported in the United States within gay men's communities during the 1980s.

Increasingly, these AIDS walks offer the LGBT communities—made up of many nationalities and sexes—another challenge: How to build solidarity in the fight against racism, women's oppression and imperialism.

In a March 2005 report, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released figures showing that for the first time since the AIDS epidemic began in the United States, more Black and Latino men have contracted AIDS through male-to-male sexual contact than white men. The epidemic is hitting all men of color especially hard.

In 2003 the rate increased 103 percent for African American men and 40 percent for Latinos.

The Kaiser Foundation states unequivocally that AIDS is accelerating most rapidly in the U.S. among women of color. Among all women over age 13 living with AIDS, 67 percent are African American and 16 percent are Latina.

AIDS crisis for African women, children

The U.S. figures reflect an increasing global crisis, with African peoples currently experiencing the most extreme suffering. Twenty-five million people in sub-Saharan

Africa have the HIV virus. In 2004 alone, 2.3 million died. (New York Times, May 11)

One-tenth of the world's people live in Africa. But Africans make up 70 percent of people living with AIDS. The vast majority of those affected are women. (News24.com)

According to Dr. Peter Piot, director of the United Nations AIDS program, the epidemic is still accelerating. He says, "In Swaziland, the country most affected by AIDS in the world, adult prevalence continues to climb; 42.6 percent of pregnant women there tested positive for HIV in 2004."

An additional tragic effect of the epidemic: AIDS has orphaned 12 million children in Africa. The impact of losing their parents is falling more heavily on African girls than boys. The orphaned girls drop out of school to take care of siblings. They do the work of their mothers, cooking and walking miles for water. And they also need work that brings in money.

Some obtain employment as domestic workers. The economic pressure to seek money for sex is intense. This increases their risk of contracting the AIDS virus.

A new UNICEF study shows that orphaned girls in Zimbabwe are "three times more likely to become infected than girls whose parents are alive." (New York Times, June 3)

Solidarity with African peoples

And how has the U.S. government responded to this global crisis?

The Democratic Clinton-Gore administration invoked copyright law to fight African nations' attempt to produce inexpensive generic AIDS drugs that would have saved millions of lives.

The Republican Bush administration boasts of its pledge to combat AIDS. But the \$15 billion allocated in its 2003 budget was spread over three years and among 15 countries, while the United States has spent over 10 times that amount on the war on Iraq. (costofwar.com)

This "Global AIDS Bill" also mandated that up to one-third of its funds be spent on "abstinence-only" programs, which research has proved to be ineffective. (SIECUS)

These genocidal U.S. policies flow from centuries of super-exploitation of Africa by Western nations. Bush administration officials are open about their goals, saying any aid to Africa must be part of "increased trade and private flows of capital" into the continent.

From the profits made from the slave trade, to the 19th century carving up of the continent into colonies by Britain, France, Germany and others, Africa has lost incalculable riches in resources, infrastructure and people. Today, says Global Witness Director Simon Taylor, "Western companies and banks have colluded in stripping Africa's resources." The June 1 British Guardian notes, "A new 'scramble for Africa' is taking place among the world's big powers, who are tapping into the continent for its oil and diamonds."

The devastation in Africa; the AIDS epidemic; the ravages of imperialism, racism and women's oppression—all challenge those celebrating Pride this June in the United States to internationalize the struggle. This includes demanding the right of the African peoples to reparations from the capitalist countries that plundered this continent for centuries.

Simon Nkoli—a gay South African freedom fighter, a leader of the 1976 Soweto uprising—was an AIDS activist for 13 years. Before he died of the disease in 1998, Nkoli said: “Homophobia is part of discrimination. We cannot deal with it in isolation. We are trying to link our struggle with the struggle of the majority of the people against apartheid and racism.” ♣

Capitalist greed behind aborted coup in Africa

By Monica Moorehead
Workers World, March 25, 2004

Zimbabwean officials have announced that they will bring legal charges against 67 mercenaries detained March 7 after a plane full of the professional killers and their high-tech equipment touched down at Harare International Airport.

The leaders of the mercenaries have admitted that they were flying from South Africa to a secret military base in Cameroon, with the objective of kidnapping the president of nearby Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema. They intended to replace him with a leader of the Spanish-based opposition, Severo Moto Nsa. Equatorial Guinea is a former colony of Spain.

The mercenaries included South Africans, at least one of whom holds British citizenship, Angolans, Namibians, Congolese and one Zimbabwean, according to an official of the South African Foreign Ministry. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* reported on March 16 that “all were reportedly carrying South African passports, and are said to be ex-South African military or police personnel.”

Since the downfall of the apartheid regime, its former operatives have been a thorn in the side of the South African coalition government, dominated by Black representatives of the African National Congress. The South African government is reported to have tipped off Zimbabwe about the group's arrival. It says they will be tried in Zimbabwe, although South African law does allow for citizens arrested in another country to be transported back to South Africa.

Since these arrests, the big-business media have focused a lot of attention on the so-called corrupt nature of the Nguema government in Equatorial Guinea. But the United States, Britain, Spain and other imperialist governments have installed and supported many reactionary puppet regimes around the world.

Executive Outcomes, a British-based firm that provides mercenaries to private corporations, was an integral part of this ill-fated operation. According to the March 14 Sunday Herald of Harare, "The firm's latest planeload of mercenaries included many former personnel of the notorious 32 Buffalo Battalion of the South African special forces and Civil Cooperation Bureau, which was responsible for the deaths of several anti-apartheid activists."

It has been confirmed that U.S., British and Spanish intelligence agencies are the masterminds behind the aborted coup, on behalf of big-business interests. The British citizen arrested was Simon Mann, "an ex-Royal Scots Guard and troop commander with the British Special Air Services. He also has a lead role in Sandline International, a murky company with oil and mining interests, and ties to U.K. intelligence services. Sandline absorbed Executive Outcomes in 1998. Zimbabwe's Home Affairs Minister Kembo Mohadi says Mr. Mann was offered \$2.3 million and oil rights in Equatorial Guinea for the plot." (Globe and Mail, March 16)

Zimbabwe also target of imperialist destabilization

When these arrests first took place, there was justified suspicion that the United States and Britain were attempting to remove Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe from office. It is no secret that President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair are close cohorts in their efforts to economically and politically destabilize Zimbabwe.

They hate President Mugabe because he has publicly sided with dispossessed Black farmers who are seeking to regain ownership of the arable lands stolen by white commercial farmers over many decades of racist colonialism.

Bush and Blair claim that Mugabe stole the presidential election in 2002 from opposition forces that the West supported both financially and politically. Observer teams from Nigeria, Namibia and South Africa, however, stated that Mugabe won a majority of the votes fair and square.

Why were the mercenaries targeting a small country like Equatorial Guinea? Certainly one reason is that the imperialist secret agencies felt they could take advantage of the geopolitical situation. But the motive lies in the greedy nature of imperialism.

Oil, oil and more oil

EG is one of the poorest countries in Africa and the world. It was a colonial possession of Spain for 190 years until its formal independence in 1968. Its population is less than 500,000; life expectancy is 50 years for women and 48 for men. The average yearly income is \$700. (World Bank, 2001)

EG's territory includes the island of Bioko off the coast of neighboring Cameroon. Its capital, Malabo, is located there. Large deposits of oil and natural gas were discovered off Bioko during the mid-1990s. As a result, EG has become the third-biggest producer of oil in Africa, after Nigeria and Angola.

The abundance of oil has meant very little for the people of EG. In fact, as in the

rest of Africa, the minerals and wealth are being sucked out by Western multinational corporations headquartered in the large imperialist countries.

The theft of Africa's natural resources under colonialism and now neocolonialism—in which these countries' economies are controlled through debt and "structural adjustment" programs devised by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank—has kept this long-suffering continent from economic development and, along with it, true independence.

The biggest exploiters of EG's oil are all U.S. companies: ExxonMobil, Chevron Texaco and the Houston-based Marathon Oil. The United States buys 28 percent of the country's exports—mostly petroleum products. Spain buys 25 percent. (allAfrica.com, March 12)

The imperialists could not care less that the majority of the 600 million people on the African continent suffer from poverty, HIV/AIDS, civil wars and illiteracy. Any government corruption and mismanagement stem from having local economies undermined and destroyed by imperialist greed for profits.

Right now, the Pentagon is sending troops into all parts of Africa, especially the north and west, under the pretext of fighting al-Qaeda and "terrorism." In truth, the most important reason is to protect the economic domination of U.S. foreign capital against its rivals in Europe and Japan.

Whether through open colonialism or setting up neocolonial puppet states, today's imperialist powers got rich through the plunder and super-exploitation of Africa as well as Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean. The masses in those developing countries need international, revolutionary solidarity from the workers in the imperialist centers, especially through the demand that the exploiters pay long-overdue reparations for their theft. ✿

'U.S. trying to re-enslave Africa'

By Monica Moorehead

From a talk at a forum on June 22, 2003, entitled "Zimbabwe and Mugabe: Governance, the Land Question and Its Impact Worldwide" in Harlem, New York. Other panelists included Viola Plummer, December 12th Movement; Elombe Brath, Patrice Lumumba Coalition; Ibrahim Rainey, Fellowship for Reconciliation; and Nellie Hester Bailey, a Harlem tenants' organizer. Bailey chaired the event, which was organized by the Uptown Brecht Forum. Junior Mambazo, a South African a cappella singing group, performed.

Zimbabwe is an issue that should be of great interest not only to the Black movement but for every progressive movement for social change, regardless of nationality, class, sex, gender or age. What lurks behind the economic and political attacks on Zimbabwe, along with the brutal war and occupation of Iraq, the daily Zi-

onist atrocities against righteous Palestinian resistance, the deepening threats against Iran, Cuba and North Korea, and the decline of living standards at home is U.S. imperialism.

It is U.S. imperialism, in the guise of the Bush regime, that threatens the entire planet with endless war for empire in order to re-carve up the world for profits on behalf of U.S. big oil conglomerates and other greedy corporate interests.

This is the economic and geopolitical context in which the Zimbabwe situation must be viewed and understood if there is to be any clarity in perspective and tactics. Slowly but surely the U.S. is positioning itself to overtake its European imperialist rivals to become the number-one military slave master of Africa. The imperialist banks have already enslaved Africa's economy, which has led to the deepening plunder of Africa's abundant mineral wealth along with unimaginable underdevelopment and imperialist-backed tragic civil wars.

Zimbabwe was brutally colonized by European imperialism in the late 1800s and won nominal independence in 1980 due to a guerrilla struggle. I say nominal because, to this day, 95 percent of Zimbabwe's economy is still in the hands of British corporate interests and white commercial farmers. How can a country be deemed free and independent when its economy is still dominated by its former oppressors?

This exposes the lie that President Robert Mugabe is single-handedly sabotaging the economy. If any forces are doing the sabotaging, they are the U.S., Britain and other European powers who have imposed criminal economic sanctions and other isolationist maneuvers. They are even pressuring Zimbabwe's neighbors. Just a few days ago, the Washington Post wrote a vile editorial calling for the overthrow of Robert Mugabe and insisting that President Thabo Mbeki turn off the 15 percent of the electricity that South Africa provides to Zimbabwe.

This editorial threatens the people of Zimbabwe that if they don't get rid of their president, a president they democratically elected, they will suffer the consequences of further economic destabilization that could ignite a civil war. And the Washington Post is getting its orders from a president who has violated every law on the book, including stealing the presidency by disenfranchising African Americans.

So if Bush is willing to conspire to trample on the rights of oppressed people in the U.S., who in their right mind could ever think he would hesitate to trample on the rights of people of color elsewhere? This is the same Bush who legally lynched over 150 prisoners, mostly Black, Latino and poor, as the governor of Texas; who denied the largest percentage of poor children in Texas access to the right to health care; who is providing the largest tax breaks to the super-rich ever and whose administration has done nothing to oppose the loss of over 2 million jobs during his first term in office; who submitted a legal brief to the Supreme Court opposing the University of Michigan's affirmative action program. He will express outrage when dispossessed Black farmers organize to take back their land stolen by colonialism, but is dead silent when these same Black farmers are being paid starvation wages by rich white farmers.

The bottom line is that Bush couldn't care less about the indigenous people of Zimbabwe or the 600 million people who inhabit the African continent. The pitiful amount of U.S. funds to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic that threatens millions of lives and future generations in Africa is proof positive of his "I couldn't care less about you" attitude.

Bush and Blair's beef with Mugabe has nothing to do with his policies but everything to do with making an example of Zimbabwe to prove to what lengths they will go to undermine the right to sovereignty and the right to self-determination. Bush and Blair are sending a clear message to the people of Zimbabwe and the people of Africa: if you dare to struggle to free your land and your economy, which would lay the basis for being totally independent from colonialism and imperialism, then we will do everything possible to re-enslave you and your country.

So no matter what you may think of Robert Mugabe, there is no denying that he has taken a defiant stance against imperialist arrogance. This is a man who has fought for most of his adult life against colonialism; a man who was a leader of a national liberation movement. This cannot be dismissed and it has not been forgotten by imperialism. In fact, it is a big reason why they still despise him.

We cannot allow ourselves as revolutionaries and as activists to trip and fall into the imperialist camp. To consciously or unconsciously side with the imperialists weakens and divides our movement and helps to reinforce the racist view that only colonialism can save Africa from so-called despotic leaders.

U.S. imperialism is hypocritical when it denounces "repressive measures" taken by the Mugabe government. Look at the repression we face right here if we organize anti-war or anti-police brutality demonstrations. When aren't there thousands of NYPD cops in full riot gear trying to intimidate and even arrest us when we exercise our right to freedom of assembly and free speech? Look at how revolutionaries like Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier are locked away because they dared to speak out against this terrible, racist, oppressive system.

We have to continue to expose the real aims and objectives of U.S. imperialism in Zimbabwe, in Africa and throughout the world. The fact that the U.S. is orchestrating to overthrow legitimate governments, not because they promote so-called terrorism but because they are defending their right to sovereignty, exposes the unprecedented criminality of imperialism.

The U.S. may possess the most powerful military arsenal in the world, but its military prowess cannot overcome overwhelming worldwide public opinion against war and occupation. This has been evident for the past several months as tens of millions of people took to the streets to oppose a war on Iraq. The U.S. may have won the military battle in Iraq but it will never win over the hearts and the minds of the Iraqi people as the popular resistance grows stronger day by day and U.S. troop morale plummets.

Hands off Zimbabwe! Pay reparations now to the African people for colonial crimes against humanity! U.S. imperialism out of Africa! ♣

The driving force behind land seizures

By Monica Moorehead
Workers World, Aug. 29, 2002

On Aug. 15, the Zimbabwean government, led by President Robert Mugabe, began the process of physically expropriating the land from white farmers who had defied the timetable given them to abandon their farms.



Zimbabwean war veterans demand their land.

The Western capitalist press reported that as of Aug. 18, over 130 white farmers had been arrested for refusing to relinquish the lands to war veterans. These veterans are Black Zimbabweans who fought a national-liberation struggle against Ian Smith's white racist regime.

Smith ruled what was then called Rhodesia from 1965-1980. It was much like the apartheid regime of South Africa. Smith remains a landowner in Zimbabwe while the masses remain landless.

The Lancaster House agreement the liberation forces of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) signed with the Smith regime in 1980 fell far short of winning total liberation for the masses. In essence, the agreement helped the white farmers and corporate interests to maintain economic control of Zimbabwe, while former members of the

liberation forces took over the administrative reins and ran the country politically.

In the 19th century, Zimbabwe was made a colonial possession by the racist colonizer, Cecil Rhodes, on behalf of the British Empire, which named the nation after Rhodes for this conquest. For many generations to the present day, the Zimbabwean people along with the rest of the African continent have been brutally robbed of land, resources, cultural and economic development and subjected to slave labor under colonialism and neocolonialism.

The capitalist press has characterized Mugabe in the most horrible racist way, calling him a dictator and a tyrant. But what is really behind this demonization? It is a cover-up for the main crime against humanity.

Poverty: Who's to blame?

What is the relationship of these land seizures to the deepening impoverishment of the Zimbabwean people?

The Zimbabwean economy is based mainly on agriculture, like most of Africa, due to colonial underdevelopment. Before the recent land seizures, 4,500 white commercial farmers controlled at least 70 percent of the most arable lands. Most Zimbabweans were reduced to being peons or tenants in relationship to the land. Others exist in barren, Bantustan-type conditions.

Black Zimbabweans do not hold the reins of real power—they neither own the major means of production nor control how the economy is run. The Zimbabwean

people are dispossessed not only of their lands but of the economy as a whole.

Baffour Ankomah spent two weeks in Zimbabwe after the recent reelection of Mugabe. In his special report called "Zimbabwe: Life after the election," in the May edition of the *New African* publication, he makes this point on the economy: Black Zimbabweans control just 4 percent of the economy while the white farmers control 30 percent and British-dominated transnational corporations control 66 percent of the economy.

That means that 96 percent of the economy is out of control of the Black Zimbabwean people.

The life of Black workers on these white farms is very similar to a slave plantation in the old U.S. South. The *New African* report states that on one farm in the northern part of the country, Black workers are forced to work 13-hour days for Z\$1,500 per month. The Zim dollar amounts to Z\$55 to the US\$1 on paper but in reality, on the informal market, the Z dollar is really Z\$300 to the US\$1. So in U.S. dollars this amounts to an astounding \$5 for these Black workers, not per week but per month!



Ankomah quoted a number of Black workers who described this super-exploitation: "If you are employed on January 1, you get your first pay check on February 15, and the cycle goes on. At the end of the year, it adds up to three months lost pay. And we never get paid our full salary, never; because by the end of the month, we already owe the boss money that he takes out of our salaries before paying us."

The highest-paid farm worker in Zimbabwe reportedly makes Z\$3,000, or US\$10 per month. Urban Zimbabweans are relegated to being servants for corporate management.

Food Production

The land question ultimately leads to the issue of food production. Zimbabwe is in the throes of a horrible famine brought on by a long period of drought. Pro-imperialist critics have accused Mugabe of wielding food policies as a "political weapon."

Some of the big-business press and Western imperialist apologists state that yes, war veterans should have the land, but white farmers are needed because they have the expertise to grow food to turn around the famine. This is not only a racist insult to justify these white-owned farms, but a lie to boot.

These racist farmers couldn't care less about the plight of six million starving, malnourished Zimbabweans. These farmers are tied to the worldwide capitalist market, meaning that they are driven to sell their harvest to the agribusiness market to make the most profits.

It has been documented that these white farmers have destroyed maize, the main staple crop of the country, for political reasons or have turned this crop into animal feed rather than provide it for human consumption.

George Monbiot, in his article "Our Racist Demonology" that appeared in the Guardian (UK) on Aug. 13, states that 70 percent of the maize crop is not grown by white farmers but by Black peasant farmers, who are desperately trying to feed their families. In reality, a majority of the white farms grow tobacco and not food for the population.

In the aftermath of the national-liberation struggle, Zimbabwe was able to produce enough food to feed its population. Today, as a victim of the globalization of capitalism, it is forced to rely on food aid. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund forces the government to use money that used to go for education, health care and other social services to pay the foreign debt.

It is no wonder these war veterans have decided to take matters in their own hands to reclaim the farm land that should be theirs by birthright. By expropriating the land, these former colonized masses are carrying out their own form of Reconstruction or reparations that is long overdue. What is going on in Zimbabwe today is really another stage in the ongoing revolution for winning democratic rights. ♣

Africa needs reparations, not occupation and sanctions

By Deirdre Griswold

Workers World, Sept. 23, 2005

The people of large parts of Africa are suffering from a famine that is just as "unexpected" as was the hurricane disaster in Louisiana.

Since a drought, followed by a plague of locusts last November, destroyed most of the food crops in a broad swath of sub-Saharan lands, it was known by many international agencies tasked with providing humanitarian aid that there would be mass hunger and even starvation this summer in countries like Niger, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and others.

These agencies said they sounded the alarm but, just as in the case of the warnings about what a severe storm would do to New Orleans, the authorities who control the resources that could make the difference between life and death did virtually nothing.

The result has been heart-breaking images of babies and small children reduced to skeletons, dying at feeding stations that were set up too late to make a difference. The cameras of BBC have been in Niger, but the story is the same in several other countries.

Adding to the anguish of the people is the fact that, while food aid came too little and too late, it is now about to end. The policy of the donor agencies is to pull out when there is a new harvest. The problem is that many of the farmers are deeply in debt because there was no harvest last year, so whatever they earn this fall at the market will go to pay that debt. They will have nothing left, and will be just as vulnerable to starvation as they were last year.

Just as in New Orleans, a natural disaster was involved in Africa, but it is by no means the whole story. The poverty in Africa is the real culprit. And this poverty, in a continent rich in natural resources, comes from its history of plunder by Europe and the U.S., where the ruling classes have amassed vast fortunes from their colonial and imperialist conquests.

The U.S. and Britain are now threatening Zimbabwe, a country in southeastern Africa once ruled over by Britain, with economic sanctions. Zimbabwe is on their hit list because it has been turning land titles over to African families, many of them veterans of its war for independence. That land was formerly owned by white settlers, who at one time had control over most of Zimbabwe's most productive land.

Zimbabwe paid the white farmers compensation for the land, but that didn't appease them. Many are descendants of the soldier-settlers who first stole the land from the African people living there when Britain took the area for its colony.

Zimbabwe is another country suffering from drought at present. It needs help from the world, not sanctions meant to bring its leaders to their knees. Most of all, it and the rest of Africa need reparations for the terrible damage done by the slave trade, colonialism and now the intrigues and exploitation of imperialist corporations.

The pictures of African children dying of famine don't have to be. A small amount of money could end the famine and help the people be more self-sufficient. Just recently, Washington launched a military expansion in Africa called the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative that will cost \$500 million over the next five years.

Africa, like New Orleans, needs relief and the development of its infrastructure, not Pentagon military occupation. ♣

The U.S. role in Darfur, Sudan

By Sara Flounders

Worker World, June 3, 2006

What is fueling the campaign now sweeping the U.S. to "Stop Genocide in Darfur"? Campus organizations have suddenly begun organizing petitions, meetings and calls for divestment. A demonstration was held April 30 on the Mall in Washington, D.C., to "Save Darfur."

Again and again it is said that "something" must be done. "Humanitarian forces" and "U.S. peacekeepers" must be deployed immediately to stop "ethnic cleansing." UN troops or NATO forces must be used to stop "genocide." The U.S. government has a "moral responsibility to prevent another Holocaust."

Outrage is provoked by media stories of mass rapes and photos of desperate refugees. The charge is that tens of thousands of African people are being killed by Arab militias backed by the Sudanese government. Sudan is labeled as both a "terrorist state" and a "failed state." Even at anti-war rallies, signs have been distributed pro-

claiming “Out of Iraq—Into Darfur.” Full-page ads in the New York Times have repeated the call.

Who is behind the campaign and what actions are they calling for?

Even a cursory look at the supporters of the campaign shows the prominent role of right-wing evangelical Christians and major Zionist groups to “Save Darfur.”

A Jerusalem Post article of April 27 headlined “U.S. Jews Leading Darfur Rally Planning” described the role of prominent Zionist organizations in organizing the April 30 rally. A full-page ad for the rally in the New York Times was signed by a number of Jewish organizations, including the UJA-Federation of NY and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

But it wasn’t just Zionist groups that called it. The rally was sponsored by a coalition of 164 organizations that included the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Evangelical Alliance and other religious groups that have been the strongest supporters of the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq. The Kansas-based evangelical group Sudan Sunrise helped arrange buses and speakers, did extensive fund raising and co-hosted a 600-person dinner.

This was hardly an anti-war or social justice rally. The organizers had a personal meeting with President George W. Bush just before the rally. He told them: “I welcome your participation. And I want to thank the organizers for being here.”

Originally the demonstration was projected to draw a turnout of more than 100,000. Media coverage generously reported “several thousands,” ranging from 5,000 to 7,000. The rally was overwhelming white. Despite sparse numbers, it got wide media coverage, focusing on celebrity speakers like Academy Award winner George Clooney. Top Democrats and Republicans gave it their blessing, including U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), House minority leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine. Corzine, by the way, spent \$62 million of his own money to get elected.

The corporate media gave this rally more prominence than either the anti-war rally of 300,000 in New York City on the day before or the millionfold demonstrations across the country for immigrant rights on the day after.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Bolton, former Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Gen. Wesley Clark and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have all argued in favor of intervention in Sudan.

These leading architects of imperialist policy often refer to another model when they call for this intervention: the successful “humanitarian” war on Yugoslavia that established a U.S./NATO administration over Kosovo after a massive bombing campaign.

The Holocaust Museum in Washington issued a “genocide alert”—the first such alert ever issued—and 35 evangelical Christian leaders signed a letter urging President Bush to send U.S. troops to stop genocide in Darfur. A special national curriculum for students was established to generate grassroots support for U.S. intervention.

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) have embraced the campaign. Liberal voices such as Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, Rabbi Michael Lerner of TIKKUN and Human Rights Watch have also pushed the campaign to "Save Darfur."

Diversions from Iraq debacle

The criminal invasion and massive bombing of Iraq, the destruction of its infrastructure that left the people without water or basic electricity, and the horrible photos of the U.S. military's use of torture at Abu Ghraib prison created a world outcry. At its height, in September 2004, Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell went to Sudan and announced to the world that the crime of the century—"a genocide"—was taking place there. The U.S. solution was to demand the United Nations impose sanctions on one of the poorest countries on earth and that U.S. troops be sent there as "peacekeepers."

But the rest of the UN Security Council was unwilling to accept this view, the U.S. "evidence" or the proposed action.

The campaign against Sudan increased even as evidence was being brought forward that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was based on a total lie. The same media that had given credibility to the U.S. government's claim that it was justified in invading Iraq because that country had "weapons of mass destruction" switched gears to report on "war crimes" by Arab forces in Sudan.

This Darfur campaign accomplishes several goals of U.S. imperialist policy. It further demonizes Arab and Muslim people. It diverts attention from the human-rights catastrophe caused by the brutal U.S. war and occupation of Iraq, which has killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

It is also an attempt to deflect attention from the U.S. financing and support of Israel's war on the Palestinian people.

Most important, it opens a new front in the determination of U.S. corporate power to control the entire region.

U.S. interest in Sudan

Sudan is the largest country in Africa in area. It is strategically located on the Red Sea, immediately south of Egypt, and borders on seven other African countries. It is about the size of Western Europe but has a population of only 35 million people.

Darfur is the western region of Sudan. It is the size of France, with a population of just 6 million.

Newly discovered resources have made Sudan of great interest to U.S. corporations. According to Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al Bashir, Sudan might have oil reserves as large or larger than those of Saudi Arabia, currently considered to have the world's largest reserve. It has large deposits of natural gas. In addition, it has one of the three largest deposits of high-purity uranium in the world, along with the fourth-largest deposits of copper.

Unlike Saudi Arabia, however, the Sudanese government has retained its independence of Washington. Unable to control Sudan's oil policy, the U.S. imperialist government has made every effort to stop its development of this valuable resource. China, on the other hand, has worked with Sudan in providing the technology for exploration, drilling, pumping and the building of a pipeline and buys much of Sudan's oil.

U.S. policy revolves around shutting down the export of oil through sanctions and inflaming national and regional antagonisms. For over two decades U.S. imperialism supported a separatist movement in the south of Sudan, where oil was originally found. This long civil war drained the central government's resources. When a peace agreement was finally negotiated, U.S. attention immediately switched to Darfur in western Sudan.

Recently, a similar agreement between the Sudanese government and rebel groups in Darfur was rejected by one of the groups, so the fighting continues. The U.S. poses as a neutral mediator and keeps pressing Khartoum for more concessions but "through its closest African allies helped train the SLA and JEM Darfuri rebels that initiated Khartoum's violent reaction." (www.afrol.com)

Sudan has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world. Over 400 ethnic groups have their own languages or dialects. Arabic is the one common language. Greater Khartoum, the largest city in the country, has a population of about 6 million. Some 85 percent of the Sudanese population is involved in subsistence agriculture or raising livestock.

The U.S. corporate media is unanimous in simplistically describing the crisis in Darfur as atrocities committed by the Jan jawid militias, supported by the central government in Khartoum. This is described as an "Arab" assault on "African" people.

This is a total distortion of reality. As the Black Commentator, Oct. 27, 2004, points out: "All parties involved in the Darfur conflict—whether they are referred to as 'Arab' or as 'African'—are equally indigenous and equally Black. All are Muslim and all are local." The whole population of Darfur speaks Arabic, along with many local dialects. All are Sunni Muslim.

Drought, famine and sanctions

The crisis in Darfur is rooted in intertribal fighting. A desperate struggle has developed over increasingly scarce water and grazing rights in a vast area of Northern Africa that has been hit hard by years of drought and growing famine.

Darfur has over 35 tribes and ethnic groups. About half the people are small subsistence farmers, the other half nomadic herders. For hundreds of years the nomadic population grazed their herds of cattle and camels over hundreds of miles of grassy lowlands. Farmers and herders shared wells. For over 5,000 years, this fertile land sustained civilizations in both western Darfur and to the east, all along the Nile River.

Now, due to the drought and the encroaching great Sahara Desert, there isn't enough grazing land or enough farmland in what could be the breadbasket of Africa.

Irrigation and development of Sudan's rich resources could solve many of these problems. U.S. sanctions and military intervention will solve none of them.

Many people, especially children, have died in Sudan of totally preventable and treatable diseases because of a U.S. cruise missile attack, ordered by President Bill Clinton on Aug. 20, 1998, on the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum. This plant, which had produced cheap medications for treating malaria and tuberculosis, provided 60 percent of the available medicine in Sudan.

The U.S. claimed Sudan was operating a VX poison gas facility there. It produced no evidence to back up the charge. This simple medical facility, totally destroyed by the 19 missiles, was not rebuilt, nor did Sudan receive a penny of compensation.

UN/NATO role in Sudan

Presently 7,000 African Union troops are in Darfur. Their logistical and technical backup is provided by U.S. and NATO forces. In addition, thousands of UN personnel are overseeing refugee camps for hundreds of thousands dislocated by the drought, famine and war. All of these outside forces do more than hand out needed food. They are a source of instability. As capitalist would-be conquerors have done for hundreds of years, they consciously play one group off against another.

U.S. imperialism is heavily involved in the entire region. Chad, which is directly west of Darfur, last year participated in a U.S.-organized international military exercise that, according to the U.S. Defense Department, was the largest in Africa since World War II. Chad is a former French colony, and both French and U.S. forces are heavily involved in funding, training and equipping the army of its military ruler, Idriss Deby, who has supported rebel groups in Darfur.

For more than half a century, Britain ruled Sudan, encountering widespread resistance. British colonial policy was rooted in divide-and-conquer tactics and in keeping its colonies underdeveloped and isolated in order to plunder their resources.

U.S. imperialism, which has replaced the European colonial powers in many parts of the world, in recent years has been sabotaging the economic independence of countries trying to emerge from colonial underdevelopment. Its main economic weapons have been sanctions combined with "structural adjustment" demands made by the International Monetary Fund, which it controls. In return for loans, the target governments must cut their budgets for development of infrastructure.



Protest in Sudan shortly after the U.S. bombing of the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in 1998.



The International Action's Ramsey Clark and John Parker interviewed Sudanese doctors and others about the immediate loss of workers' lives from U.S. bombing of the El Shifa pharmaceutical factory and the far greater consequence caused by the loss of medicines in many African countries.

How can demands from organizations in the West for sanctions, leading to further underdevelopment and isolation, solve any of these problems?

Washington has often used its tremendous power in the UN Security Council to get resolutions endorsing its plans to send U.S. troops into other countries. None were on humanitarian missions.



Patrice Lumumba, Congo's martyred first prime minister.

U.S. troops carrying the UN flag invaded Korea in 1950 in a war that resulted in more than 4 million deaths. Still flying that flag, they have occupied and divided the Korean peninsula for over 50 years.

At the urging of the U.S., UN troops in 1961 were deployed to the Congo, where they played a role in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the country's first prime minister.

The U.S. was able to get a UN mandate in 1991 for its massive bombing of the entire Iraqi civilian infrastructure, including water purification plants, irrigation and food processing plants—and for the 13 years of starvation sanctions that resulted in the deaths of over 1.5 million Iraqis.

UN troops in Yugoslavia and in Haiti have been a cover for U.S. and European intervention and occupation—not peace or reconciliation.

The U.S. and European imperialist powers are responsible for the genocidal slave trade that decimated Africa, the genocide of the Indigenous population of the Americas, the colonial wars and occupations that looted three-quarters of the globe. It was German imperialism that was responsible for the genocide of Jewish people. To call for military intervention by these same powers as the answer to conflicts among the people of Darfur is to ignore 500 years of history. ♣

Sara Flounders went to Sudan just after the bombing of the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in 1998 with John Parker as part of an International Action Center fact-finding delegation led by Ramsey Clark.

The U.S. role: What's at stake in the Horn of Africa

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, Jan. 7, 2007

An estimated 15,000 Ethiopian troops invaded Mogadishu, the capital of the African country of Somalia, in late December to militarily defeat the Islamic Courts Union. The ICU until recently controlled large sections of the southern part of that country. It has now pulled back from the cities and said it will conduct guerrilla warfare against the invaders.

This war and invasion began to escalate in early 2006. Somalia's Transitional Federal Government, which has been put together with U.S. and British connivance, supported the invasion.

As of Jan. 1, the ICU forces have been pushed back on a temporary basis. The ICU has a mass base among many Somalis, along with other Muslims throughout the region, due in part to social services it provides for the poor, especially in the areas of health and education.

The U.S. government has openly supported this invasion under the guise of the Bush administration's on-going war against "terrorism," which began after 9/11. This war began with the illegal invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and now has spread its tentacles into the Horn of Africa. Millions of Muslims view Bush's endless war as a ploy to attack Islam, not just as a religion but also for daring to resist imperialist and colonial aggression.

This recent conflict has drawn Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda into an anti-ICU alliance. Jakkie Ciliers, executive director of South Africa's Institute for Security Studies, stated in the article "Africa, Root Causes and the War on Terror," that "The potential impact upon the region is catastrophic, and may, if not checked, open the Horn as the latest battleground between the U.S. and Islam with disastrous consequences for its peoples, regional stability and the consolidation of African development, peace and security."

A UN resolution orchestrated by the U.S. and Britain, which hold permanent positions on the Security Council, is being used to justify sending a "peacekeeping force" to Somalia to protect the transitional U.S.-backed government there from the ICU forces.

Fighting "terrorism" or quest for oil?

What has been the concrete involvement of the U.S. in this war between Ethiopia and Somalia, two of the poorest countries in the world?

According to William Church, director of the Great Lakes Centre for Strategic Studies, the CIA has been funneling between \$100,000 and \$150,000 monthly to

the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism, which includes Somali officials recognized by the West, “warlords” and business people. Military equipment has also been donated to the Somali military by Select Armor, a private company based in Virginia.

The Pentagon also sent \$19 million worth of weapons and loans to Ethiopia in 2005 and is scheduled to provide another \$10 million worth of weapons this year. (Sudan Tribune) In countries as poor as Somalia and Ethiopia, this is a lot of money.

Just as Bush used the phony excuse of “fighting terrorism” to invade and occupy Iraq, he is using the same excuse to justify Washington’s support for the invasion of Somalia by Ethiopia. And just as controlling another country’s oil reserves was the real reason for invading Iraq, the same holds true for this recent invasion of the Horn of Africa.

The Horn has great strategic value, since naval bases there can control the traffic of tankers and other ships through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. In addition, however, the U.S. is well aware that Africa has the world’s third-largest oil reserves, after the Middle East and Latin America.

Industry sources say these reserves amount to over 95 billion barrels, or about 8 percent of the world’s total. Nigeria is the largest producer of oil on the African continent. It remains one of the poorest countries because Shell, ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, not the Nigerian people, control the oil production, wealth and profits there.



Moorehead, Monica (Editor). *Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle*.

New York, NY, USA: World View Forum, 2007. p 10.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/iupui/Doc?id=10425268&ppg=121>

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Much of Africa's overall oil reserves are untapped and are strategically located in the Horn of Africa, which is on the Red Sea and is a direct route to the oil-rich Middle East.

The Pentagon established a Central Command in Africa in 2002 and stationed naval warships off the Horn of Africa. The excuse was that they were monitoring the movements of al-Qaeda members based in Afghanistan.

Just last month, the Pentagon sent a proposal to the White House requesting that an African Command be set up to oversee all U.S. military maneuvers throughout the African region. Bush is expected to approve this request within the next few months.

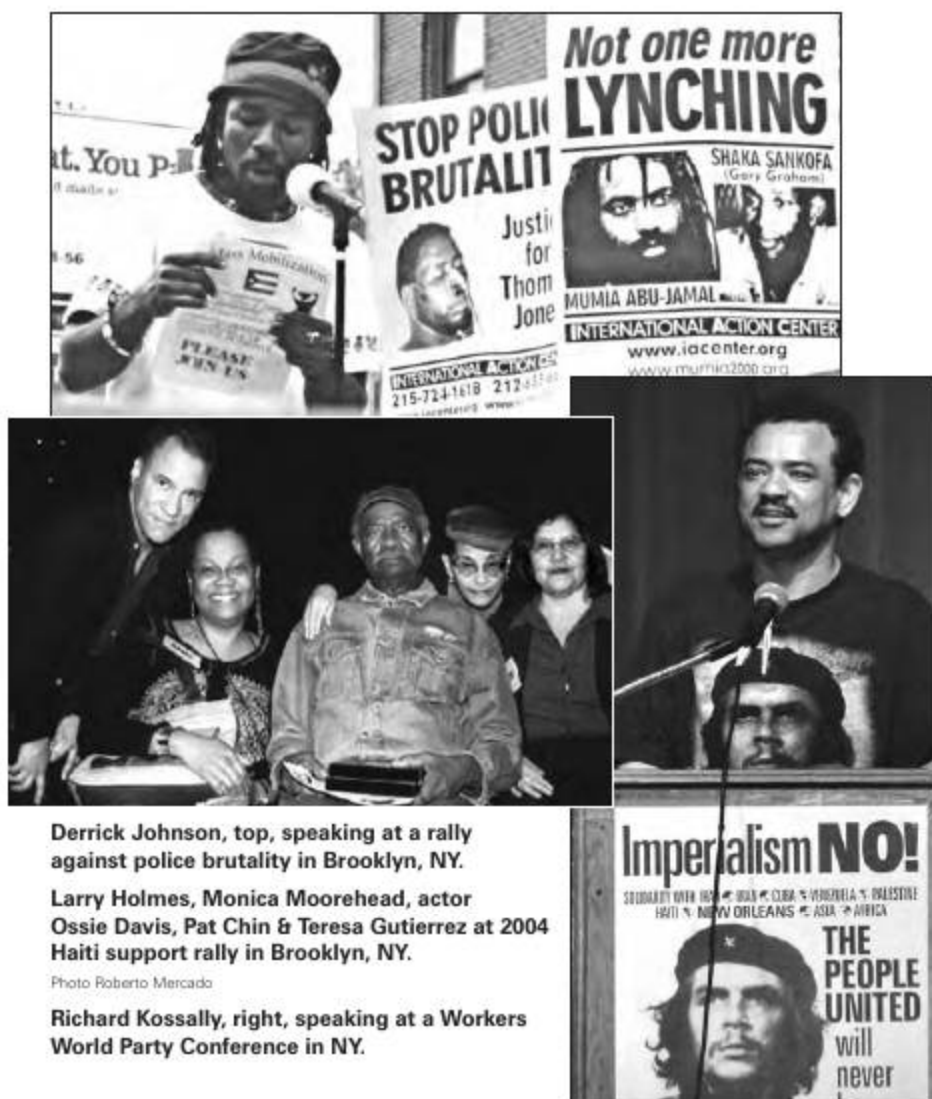
Can there be any doubt that both these commands will carry out the same task of working on behalf of Big Oil transnational corporations in an attempt to oversee the drilling for oil that is expected to occur in the Red Sea?

The U.S. has expressed concern that representatives of the Chinese government recently visited Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia to discuss oil and trade agreements with those governments. China is offering developing countries better terms than those established by the imperialist powers. This is another reason why the U.S. wants to deepen its economic influence in Africa through military hegemony.

The U.S. ruling elite and its military arm couldn't care less for the people of Somalia, Ethiopia or the African people in general. Friends can become enemies and vice-versa at a blink of the eye when securing profits is at stake.

A case in point is during the early 1990s, when the U.S. military invaded Somalia under the guise of providing humanitarian aid. The troops were driven out by the heroic resistance of the Somali people. Another example is that the U.S. was a major enemy of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution until it was weakened and then eventually overthrown by internal and external factors, including U.S. intervention. Today, the government in Ethiopia is to the liking of the White House.

It is important for revolutionaries and progressive activists to expose what is going on in the Horn of Africa and connect this development to the overall struggle against U.S. imperialist designs in the Middle East, Asia and elsewhere. The people of Africa deserve reparations, political stability and economic development free from imperialist domination and plunder. ♣



Derrick Johnson, top, speaking at a rally against police brutality in Brooklyn, NY.

Larry Holmes, Monica Moorehead, actor Ossie Davis, Pat Chin & Teresa Gutierrez at 2004 Haiti support rally in Brooklyn, NY.

Photo Roberto Mercado

Richard Kossally, right, speaking at a Workers World Party Conference in NY.

Moorehead, Monica (Editor). *Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle*.

New York, NY, USA: World View Forum, 2007. p 12.

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VI. Justice for the Caribbean



Paul Bogle,
Nanny and
Sam Sharpe,
Jamaican
rebel
leaders.



Causes of turmoil in Jamaica

PART 1

By Pat Chin

Workers World, Oct. 4, 2001

Some months ago, an upsurge of violence in Jamaica was featured prominently in the big-business news. Absent, however, was any in-depth analysis of the complex social problems facing the Caribbean island-nation.

Missing from the coverage was Jamaica's long history of slavery and colonialism, with their legacy of severe class divisions, racism and poverty. The role of capitalist financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, their relationship to U.S. transnational companies operating in the country and how they deliberately prevent development were, of course, omitted.

General elections are set for next year, and political loyalties are very intense in Jamaica. This historical fact, no doubt, has contributed to the upsurge of violence involving factions from the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) and the ruling People's National Party (PNP), as well as the repressive forces of the state—the army and police.

Politically motivated gang wars are nothing new. In fact, the first recorded flareup of election-related violence took place in 1967 in the West Kingston constituency of Edward Seaga, a pro-Washington conservative member of parliament who now also heads the JLP.

Killings in West Kingston

The latest clashes started in early May after three PNP activists were shot and killed. They included William Moore, a gang boss and popular community leader said to be involved in the drug trade. Many Jamaicans are forced into this line of work due to poverty.

Retaliations soon followed with more people being gunned down. The toll increased when on July 5 members of the security forces raided the West Kingston neighborhoods of Tivoli Gardens and Denham Town—JLP strongholds—claiming to be looking for guns.

Two bystanders were immediately slain in the fierce gun battles that erupted.

When the four-day police siege finally ended, 27 people had been killed and close to 50 wounded. The deceased included three cops and a soldier and two people who succumbed to chronic illnesses because they were unable to get to the hospital.

JLP head Seaga, who represents the areas, accused the government of fomenting violence—including the police assault—to embarrass him as a pre-election ploy.

Facing sharp criticism, Prime Minister P. J. Patterson responded by sending Security Minister K. D. Knight to the former colonial masters in London, begging for more equipment, including armored vehicles and training for the security forces. Weeks later, Patterson announced the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the violence.

"The problems are in Kingston," said Knight in an interview published in the July 24 issue of the *Toronto Star*. "The rest of Jamaica is not a problem.... The current trouble is nothing to do with politics or political gangs."

In late July, an additional five people were shot dead "in clashes between gunmen from rival areas dominated by the opposition Jamaica Labor Party or the ruling People's National Party," reported the Aug. 3 issue of *Caribbean Daylight*. Since then, sporadic outbreaks of election-related violence have continued.

Class politics and globalization

What are the causes of the turmoil now convulsing Jamaican society, which has seen a steep rise in acts of desperation leading to so-called criminal activity? A look at the country's history from a class point of view and for the impact of what would today be called "globalization" is most instructive.

Jamaica had enjoyed rapid industrial growth during the 1950s and 1960s as the bauxite industry boomed. Multinational companies like Alcan, Alcoa, Reynolds and Kaiser raked in huge profits. Despite this, however, the majority of the population—mostly dark-skinned Jamaicans of African ancestry—remained poor.

In the 1970s the economy almost totally collapsed due to a downturn in bauxite prices and the skyrocketing cost of oil. In addition, the CIA had moved to destabilize the new progressive government headed by Michael Manley, the PNP candidate who had been elected in a 1972 landslide.

The bloody CIA campaign, which exploited Jamaica's history of politically motivated gang warfare, left over 750 people dead. It also had a negative impact on tourism and caused the flight of capital and a "brain-drain" of skilled labor from the island, which was calculated to wreck the economy.

U.S.-backed Edward Seaga won the next elections in 1980, running on an anti-communist platform aimed at Cuba, while promising prosperity. He quickly established close ties with Washington and received unprecedented amounts of financial aid, backed by the Reagan administration, for his commitment to restoring the so-called free enterprise system.

Through the Seaga regime, the IMF, the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development dictated structural changes to Jamaica's manufacturing sector that refocused production on exports. The government reduced tariffs, opening Jamaica up to cheap U.S. imports and capital-intensive industry. This displaced many of Jamaica's small farmers and traditional enterprises.

The Seaga government also devalued the Jamaican dollar, implemented IMF wage guidelines and suppressed unions.

Although tourism rebounded between 1980 and 1986, Seaga was unable to turn the economy around. By the mid-1980s, unemployment stood at 25 percent, and the gap between rich and poor continued to grow under the IMF's harsh economic policies.

In 1989, Michael Manley—no longer the anti-imperialist, "we-are-not-for-sale" firebrand of the 1970s—was returned to office. This time, there was no CIA attempt to destabilize his campaign. He had been effectively subdued.

Having moderated his political views hoping to win favor with Washington, Manley even started wearing suits and ties.

"By 1990, after three structural adjustment loans, the minimum hourly wage in Jamaica had fallen to U.S. \$0.27, the lowest in the Caribbean Basin region," explained a report presented at the International Peoples' Tribunal to Judge the G-7 most powerful economic nations, held from July 3-4, 1993, in Tokyo, Japan.

"Due to the elimination of price controls and a series of devaluations," continued the report, "the cost of living in Jamaica increased 1,888 percent between 1977 and 1991, outstripping teachers' pay hikes, for instance, by two-plus times...."

"Public-health expenditures were progressively cut starting in 1979 until they fell to only 6 percent of the total national budget in 1987; in 1988, fees were raised in public hospitals used mainly by the poor (particularly children) as part of a cost-recovery system." The cutbacks also resulted in a resurgence of diseases associated with malnutrition, like gastroenteritis and typhoid, as well as an increase in illiteracy.

The Jamaican economy has been further devastated by the upsurge of capitalist glo-

balization that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Successive governments—PNP included—have implemented the IMF's structural adjustment program in return for short-term loans to be repaid at exorbitant interest rates.

Jamaica's external debt—U.S. \$800 million in the 1970s— it's 52 cents of every dollar of the Gross National Product now goes towards paying just the interest on the debt. Although the country is not receiving any new funds from the IMF, the government is still reportedly implementing its guidelines.

In 1997 unemployment was still very high at 16.9 percent, according to official figures. This included the loss of 18,000 jobs since the North American Free Trade Agreement was implemented in 1994. ♣

PART 2

Workers World, October 11, 2001

The subjugation of Jamaica started when Christopher Columbus landed and took possession of the island for the Spanish crown on May 5, 1494. It was just two years after the rapacious explorer had sailed west from Europe in search of shorter trade routes to Asia in voyages that would lay the foundation for the trans-Atlantic slave trade in human cargo stolen from Africa.

When Columbus arrived, the Caribbean island was home to the Arawaks, who belonged to the linguistic stock of North American indigenous peoples. They called their home "Xaymaca"—land of wood and springs.

Jamaica was formally declared a colony in 1509 and partially settled by the Spanish adventurer Juan de Esquivel. Only sparsely populated by settlers, it remained Spain's possession for the next 161 years. Since no gold was found, the island was used as a way station for Spanish galleons sailing between the Western Hemisphere and Spain.

European pirates and buccaneers fought each other in bloody battles on the Caribbean Sea. Centrally located, Jamaica was the epicenter of their clashes for supremacy, and competing forces murdered numerous Arawaks. In addition to this, deaths from overwork and European-borne diseases soon caused the extermination of the Arawaks.

Bitter cane and slavery

Finding no gold in Jamaica and only small deposits elsewhere in the so-called West Indies, the colonialists turned to sugar. The sugarcane plant, introduced into the region by Columbus in 1493, became the new potential source of Caribbean wealth. But the Arawaks had been wiped out. Spain had a relatively small population and couldn't allow the migration of more settlers to the colony. As a result, African slaves were rounded up and shipped across the Atlantic to labor in the fields.

Admirals Penn and Venable seized Jamaica for the British crown in 1655. The small bands of slaves left behind by the Spanish—called Maroons—fled to the mountains

where they set up free communities that offered refuge to runaway slaves, while fighting off successive attempts by the British to recapture them.

English settlers, who arrived in droves, established a thriving sugar industry. Britain also populated the island with white indentured servants and prisoners captured in battles for Irish and Scottish freedom from England's colonial domination.

Based on slave labor, the new sugar industry boomed and Jamaica was soon regarded as one of the finest jewels in the British crown. But this wasn't primarily due to the huge profits being made from sugar; Jamaica had also become the biggest center for the re-exporting of slaves to other British and Spanish colonies.

"Over a million slaves were brought to Jamaica during the period of slavery, of which 200,000 were re-exported," wrote author Horace Campbell in "Rasta and Resistance From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney."

"The very fierce slaves remained in Jamaica, and by the end of the slave period, there were only 323,000 slaves who survived.

"As a center for re-export, Jamaica was the prize of the British possessions," continued Campbell, "and the planters in Jamaica were the darlings of the British aristocracy in the 18th century, when the wealth of the slaves supported Earldoms and safe parliamentary seats. The organization of the plantations, which supported the planter class, encompassed the highest form of capitalist organization at that time ... where the instrument of labor, the slave, was at the same time a commodity which could be replaced after being worked to death."

The riches amassed from piracy on the high seas and the European plunder of Central America provided the financial basis for the establishment of sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations. In turn, the experience and wealth derived from the plantation system, coupled with the massive spoils of the slave trade, laid the foundation for the European industrial revolution and gave rise to the world's first stock market in England. And for nearly 200 years Jamaica played its part as colonial subject.

History of slave revolts

It is well documented that the most rebellious Black captives who passed through Jamaica's bustling re-exportation center were left on the island, the majority being from Africa's Gold Coast. The country's history of slave revolts is consistent with this fact, the pre-emancipation period of British colonial occupation being marked by successive uprisings.

The populations of the small Maroon communities of runaway slaves, carved out after the British drove the Spanish from the island in 1655, increased sharply after major slave uprisings broke out against the new colonial regime in 1673 and 1685.

"The survival of the Maroon communities depended on the mode of social organization of the villages," explains Campbell. "In order for the Maroons to survive they had to organize a system of production and exchange, superior to the plantation levels

of cooperation, reminiscent of African communalism where they divided the tasks as they hunted, fished, and gathered wild fruits. Their scouts carried out intelligence activities on the white plantations to learn the military movements of the white people's army; they never confronted the whites on the plains and blew the Abeng horn to forewarn their villages of the impending attacks."

One of the most famous Maroon leaders was Nanny, a fierce Ashanti warrior woman, whose army of former slaves successfully used guerrilla tactics against the British on countless occasions to defend their territory in the eastern mountains.

The major Maroon War of 1729 to 1739 was fought under the leadership of Cudjoe, who was also descended from the Ashantis of Africa's Gold Coast. His guerrilla army fought the British to a standstill, and in the end they begged him to sign a treaty recognizing all Maroons as free people. The victors also won autonomy over their territories on both sides of the island, but in return for a promise of no taxation, Cudjoe agreed to refuse asylum to new runaway slaves.

Numerous slave revolts erupted after Cudjoe decimated the British Army, including another Maroon War in 1795, decades after the colonialists instigated Nanny's death. Sam Sharpe, a slave and Baptist deacon, led the biggest. Campbell describes the brilliant tactics that Sharpe executed in the Christmas Rebellion of 1831:

"Local commanders, who had previously taken on the guise of deacons, proceeded to march from plantation to plantation freeing the slaves and burning to the ground the homes of the most vicious planters. The drum, conch shells and the blowing of horns called other slaves to the ranks, so that before the night was out, 20,000 supposedly docile slaves were precipitating the death-blow to slavery in the British domains.

"As usual, capital was called upon to defend its own interests," Campbell continues, "and one of the most feared overseers, Grignon, assumed the rank of Colonel to command the Western Interior Regiment to defend the estates. But the determination of those who stood up for their rights was such that Grignon soon had to retreat to the sea, along with those whites who had already been put out to sea in the Montego Bay Harbor. This retreat left the countryside to the slaves, who pushed from Montego Bay to Savanna la Mar, freeing slaves and blowing the horns of freedom."

Two weeks later—only after they were tricked into thinking that slavery had been abolished with an amnesty—did the slaves lay down their arms. Thousands were slaughtered and many others brutally whipped in the bloody reprisals that followed.

Facing death, Sharpe was pressed to express regret for his actions. "I would rather die upon yonder gallows than live in slavery," he responded defiantly. (Quoted in Campbell)

Although Jamaica's most powerful slave rebellion was crushed through trickery, the struggle for emancipation elevated the issue of abolition, and the British Parliament was forced to formally end chattel slavery in its colonial possessions effective Aug. 1, 1834. ♣

PART 3

Workers World, Oct. 18, 2001

Three short years after Sam Sharpe's Christmas Rebellion shook Jamaica in 1831, slavery was formally abolished in all British-held colonial possessions. The costs connected to successive slave rebellions had become staggering, and sugar production was becoming unprofitable. In addition, the needs of the planter class in the colonies were fast becoming secondary to those of the rising industrial bourgeoisie.

"From the standpoint of metropolitan politics," wrote Eric Williams, former Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister, "the abolition of the Caribbean slave system was, on the one hand, a part of that general struggle of the industrial bourgeoisie against the landed aristocracy which began in France with the French Revolution of 1789, advanced in England with the First Reform Bill of 1832, triumphed with the repeal of the English Corn Laws in 1846, and culminated in the victory of the North over the South in the Civil War in the United States." ("From Columbus to Castro: the History of the Caribbean")

Emancipation was formally declared on Aug. 1, 1834, but, in typical colonial style, there was a cruel catch in the form of a mandatory four-year period of apprenticeship before full emancipation. This was calculated to convert chattel slavery to wage labor—a cheaper production method at a time when slavery had become unviable and there were no trade unions or political rights for the Black colonial subjects. The slave masters had also been paid huge sums as compensation for the loss of their slaves.

During the post-emancipation period, the planters were faced with a severe shortage of workers. The former slaves were taxed at every turn by the colonial regime as a way of ensuring a continuous flow of labor. This included levying rents on homes and provisions and even taxing the burial sites of their ancestors.

From chattel slavery to wage slavery

Many Black Jamaicans, however, resisted becoming wage slaves. They responded by rushing to the hills, seizing parcels of land and forming free villages. This gave rise to the peasantry, but many of them were still forced to work full- or part-time as wage earners on the big estates, in addition to tending their crops. Faced with a shortfall of cheap labor, 6,000 East Indians were imported by the colonialists as indentured servants between 1834 and 1865, along with people from Germany, Scotland, Ireland, China and Africa.

According to estimates cited in Horace Campbell's book, "Rasta and Resistance," 218,530 of the 317,000 African slaves in Jamaica were freed in 1838. "By 1840 there were approximately 3,000 who owned land of over 10 acres. About 20,000 owned plots of 2-10 acres, while the vast majority were strugglers who operated as workers and small farmers. It was this mass of struggling blacks who formed the embryo of the Jamaican working class."

Sugar production continued its decline, and by 1860 half of all plantations had gone bankrupt. The white British planter class started allowing a new class of land-owners made up of “mixed-bloods” and Jewish merchants of Spanish and Portuguese ancestry to buy bankrupt plantations.

The old oligarchic system of government remained, however, with the legislature being elected and controlled by a small minority of rich propertied British males who upheld racism and exploitation. “Below these planters were the Jews and an energetic stratum of mulattoes, the product of white and black miscegeny,” explains Campbell. “By 1860 the Jews had begun to dominate local parish politics, while the mulattoes spurned agricultural work and sought to dominate the professions, which serviced the plantation system.”

Conditions for the Black majority continued to deteriorate with the demise of the sugar industry and the flight of profits. The planter-dominated legislature responded by increasing taxes, which included a levy on imported foods eaten by Black Jamaicans. After the imposition of high road taxes and toll charges forced the former slaves to transport their produce by sea, canoes were taxed in addition to the existing tariff on donkeys. These outrageous levies led to the toll gate rebellions of 1859 in the western parishes of Trelawny and Westmoreland. Coercive laws were also passed to restrict the movement of Black people, including one that enabled the arrest of anyone carrying agricultural produce without written permission from the owner of the land on which it was grown. Whites would often shoot the goats and pigs of poor Blacks.

Strikes broke out on several sugar estates between 1863 and 1864 as poverty and oppression deepened. But Black workers had no cohesive organization through which to defend themselves and the free villages became the centers of protest where many forms of cultural resistance were practiced. This included a revival of “obeah”—the ritual casting out of evil spirits, and religious expressions of resistance like Myalism, and Pocomania with its intense drumming and shell blowing, which had been banned by the colonialists.

1865: The Morant Bay Rebellion

Things came to a head in October 1865 in the eastern parish of St. Thomas with an uprising known as the Morant Bay Rebellion. It erupted within the context of wrenching poverty, unjust taxation, the denial of political rights, as well as widespread hunger caused by a drought and the interruption of food imports due to the U.S. Civil War.

The parish had become a hotbed of cultural resistance, and Paul Bogle was the spiritual leader of Stony Gut, a free village community that was once a sugar estate. The residents of Stony Gut had refused to pay rent, and when the planters tried to use the legal system to have them evicted, they resisted.

The armed uprising that followed was a milestone in Jamaican history. Carefully planned under cover of numerous revival meetings, it embodied the struggle for land and self-determination and started as follows:

"Whilst a black man was being brought up for trial before justice," states the colonial record, "a large number of the peasantry armed with bludgeons and preceded by music came into the court house—openly expressing the determination to rescue the man about to be tried. One of their party having created a considerable disturbance in the court was ordered into custody, whereupon the mob rushed in and rescued the prisoner and maltreated the policeman in attendance."

An arrest warrant was issued for scores of people including Bogle. But the policemen sent to Stony Gut were captured through force of arms. The next day Bogle and his men marched on Morant Bay, shouting along the way, "Cleave to the black, color for color." (Quoted in Campbell)

Campbell recounts the procession in vivid terms: "Blowing the conch shell as a sign of war and beating the drums, the soldiers of Bogle's army reached the courthouse, where the planter Baron was trembling as he read the riot act. Before he could finish ordering the police to shoot, Bogle and his men surrounded the vestry (Parish Council). The Baron was killed and his assistant was roasted in the fire which razed the court house. The prisoners, mostly tax defaulters, were set free."

Bogle's army captured several estates, where they freed the oppressed workers. Whites who were known to be sympathetic were spared. The rebel army took control of the parish for three days in a 30-mile radius around Morant Bay. Bogle tried to extend the armed struggle west but was outgunned in the end. Vicious reprisals followed the defeat of his revolutionary band.

Paul Bogle is today a Jamaican national hero. He took up arms against the colonizers, lost the battle and was hanged on Oct. 24, 1865. George William Gordon, a mulatto legislator and sympathizer, also faced the gallows, even though he was not present in Morant Bay when the rebellion erupted. He too is a national hero. So shaken was the planter class by the insurrection that they surrendered their ancient constitution for the lesser Crown Colony form of government.

Bogle was militarily defeated but his heroic action had far-reaching effects that spanned the next hundred years, laying as it did the groundwork for continued resistance. ♣

Haiti needs reparations, not sanctions

By Pat Chin

Worker World, July 17, 2003

The Republic of Haiti will mark the 200th anniversary of its independence on Jan. 1, 2004. Preparations for celebrating the bicentennial are being made against the backdrop of a deepening economic crisis in that oppressed country, exacerbated by economic sanctions.

"For over two years," reported the May 23 Inter Press Service, "the United States, the European Union, and multilateral lenders have been holding up some \$500 million in aid and loans because they say Aristide's government and Lavalas Family party have failed to reach a compromise with opposition parties, which boycotted the 2000 Presidential race after protesting allegedly fraudulent parliamentary contests in 2000."

The Washington-backed "Democratic Convergence" is made up of 15 tiny bourgeois opposition parties, ranging from hard-core Duvalierists to Social Democrats, with no real support in the popular masses. The group is similar to the imperialist-backed "Democratic Coordination" in Venezuela that has unsuccessfully tried to oust progressive Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The Convergence has reportedly received some \$120 million from the U.S.-based right-wing National Endowment for Democracy.

In response to the imperialist maneuver to force a "regime change" by tightening the economic squeeze, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has called on France—the original colonial power to make restitution for an indemnity Haiti was forced to pay after militarily defeating the French, forcing slavery's end and declaring independence.

The French government in 1825 had demanded 90 million gold francs to "compensate" white planters for property loss due to the revolutionary war. It was decades later that Haitian independence was recognized and crippling sanctions lifted. The Aristide administration calculates the sum owed Haiti by France, including interest, to be well over \$21 billion.

The indemnity insured that Haiti would remain in debt to French financiers for most of the 1800s.

Reparations for hundreds of years of forced labor are also being demanded. This call is supported by African American organizations that have launched a movement for reparations in the U.S.

Aristide first sounded the call on April 7 at a massive gathering in front of the National Palace marking the 200th anniversary of the death, in a French prison, of revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture. Almost two months later, at a June 3 press conference during the G-8 summit of capitalist vultures in Evian, France, French Foreign Ministry



Crowds greet President Aristide at the inauguration of Fort Dimanche as a museum, February 1991. Fort Dimanche had been a prison and torture center under the U.S.-backed Duvaliers.

spokesperson François Rivasseau arrogantly rejected the demand. The summit was protested by thousands of anti-war and anti-globalization demonstrators. Rivasseau cited loans made to the Haitian government, while blaming alleged corruption and mismanagement by the Aristide administration for Haiti's economic problems.

At a May 23 "Flag Day" celebration attended by thousands of students and other supporters, Aristide also condemned global poverty and the Third World debt. "Two hundred years after the victorious revolution," he said, "the bull that turns the mill doesn't get to drink the sugar syrup. We refuse to be slaves to sub-human misery." (Inter Press Service, May 23).

Why is Haiti so poor?

The main political point made by the bourgeois "National Convergence"—like that of the racist white colonizers and imperialists—is that Haiti is wretchedly poor because the slaves killed all their white masters to gain independence and liberty. Haiti has consequently remained poor and dependent and in need of U.S. resources and technology. Government corruption is also a fundamental part of the problem, they say.

But this grossly distorts reality. Haiti's poverty lies mainly in the centuries-long crime of slavery, which produced enormous wealth for France, followed by 200 years of economic, political and military aggression waged by the European and U.S. bourgeoisies against the first free Black republic. The only country in the world where slaves

WW Photo: Pat Chin



Mass
protest in
Haiti, Dec.
16, 2006.

had liberated themselves by overthrowing their masters, Haiti was a powerful symbol of resistance and had to be punished.

The country's liberation was a beacon of hope for an end to slavery everywhere. It sent shock waves through the Americas and European capitals growing fabulously rich from the brutal trade in human Black cargo. Fearing the implications for their own slave-based economies, France joined forces with the U.S. and other European powers.

In fact, after the first rebellion in Haiti, U.S. President George Washington—a slave owner himself—directed his secretary of state, Thomas Jefferson—another slave owner—to give the white planters in Haiti \$400,000 for arms and food to resist the uprising. The U.S. did not recognize Haitian independence until after its own Civil War ended slavery some 60 years later.

On Jan. 1, 1804, Haitian revolutionary hero Gen. Jean-Jacques Dessalines had declared the country's independence. His proclamation was the culmination of years of a national liberation struggle enacted by African slaves, who had freed themselves in a revolutionary upsurge that started at a Voodoo ceremony in 1791. Voodoo, as a result, has been turned into a pejorative term.

The twisted, sadistic form of colonial logic—where the white oppressors get compensated for their loss of the ability to cruelly exploit, while the Black victims are condemned to punishing poverty—was also applied in Jamaica under the British colonialists, and in the U.S. after slavery ended.

The foreign imperialists and their collaborators among Haiti's bourgeoisie have a daunting task ahead. It is one that will surely fail as the people—supported by a solidarity movement abroad—continue to draw on their long history of struggle and resistance against racist demonization, neo-liberal capitalist exploitation and imperialist plunder. ✿

Photo: Haiti Progress

VII. A Salute to Women Revolutionaries



Boston march, Dec. 2006.

Thinking about sisters in the struggle

By Gloria Verdieu

*From a talk on International Women's Day on
March 5, 2005, at the San Diego International Action Center*

When we think of sisters in the struggle who comes to mind? Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, Septima Clark, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker. Black women of the civil rights movement and the Black liberation movement. Black women were a major part of the women's liberation movement.

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), NAACP, Black Panther Party—all are organizations in which Black women played major roles.

Political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal devotes a chapter in his recently published book "We Want Freedom" to the Panther women.



Frankye Malika Adams said this about the BPP: "Women ran the BPP pretty much. I don't know how it got to be a males' party or thought of as being a males' party. Because things, when you really look at it in terms of society, these things are looked on as being women things, you know, feeding children, taking care of the sick, and uh, so yeah, we did that. We actually ran the BPP's programs."



Safiya Bukhari

One of the first women to join the party was Tarika Lewis. In her first year of service she advanced in rank and was appointed to teach political education classes. Regina Jennings, Rosemary Mealy, Kathleen Cleaver, Afeni Shakur (mother of rapper Tupac Shakur) and Assata Shakur (exiled in Cuba) are names of other women of the BPP.

Safiya Bukhari had this to say about the service of women in the BPP: "In its brief seven-year history (1966-1973) women had been involved on every level in the BPP."

When we think of sisters in the struggle the MOVE Organization women come to mind. Pam Africa, Ramona Africa and the women who are a part of the jailed Move Nine, imprisoned now for over 26 years: Debbie Sims Africa, Janet Holloway Africa, Janine Phillips Africa and Merle Austin Africa, who died in prison in 1998.

The MOVE Organization advocates natural childbirth, feeding children natural food, teaching children at home. As with the BPP, the women play an important part.

Black women socialists

Sisters in the struggle also include Black women who have embraced socialism, the struggle for self-determination, the struggle for a better world for all, for change. Lucy Parsons, Mabel Byrd, Capitola Tasker, Lulia Jackson, Louise Thompson, Claudia Jones, Louise Thompson and Angela Davis are just a few.

Lucy Parsons, born in 1853, joined the Socialist Labor Party and fought for the rights of labor, Blacks and women until her death in 1942. She started as an anarchist demanding the abolition of all forms of political authority. In the early 1900s she worked in the radical Chicago Working Women's Union and the Socialist Labor Party, and she was one of the first women to join the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). At the founding convention of the IWW, Parsons dealt with the subjugation of women by noting, "Wherever wages are to be reduced, the capitalist class uses women to reduce them." In 1939 Lucy joined the Communist Party (CPUSA) and spent the last years of her life building that party during its militant days.

In 1934 three Black women joined the U.S. delegation that traveled to Paris for the International Women's Conference. Mabel Byrd was elected one of the conference secretaries. Capitola Tasker and Lulia Jackson stunned the conference with their eloquent testimonies about Afro-American struggles for human dignity.

When delegates at the convention called for a "peace" resolution, Lulia thundered, "Ladies, it has just been said that we must not fight, that we must be gentle and kind to our enemies, to those who are for war. I can't agree with that. Everyone knows the

cause of war, it is capitalism. We can't just give those bad capitalists their supper and put them to bed the way we do with our children. We must fight them." Lulia Jackson was active in the bitter Pennsylvania miner strikes and was familiar with the violence perpetrated by the owners.

Louise Thompson studied Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin and emerged as a leader in the Harlem Branch of the CPUSA. In the 1930s her apartment became a forum where Black intellectuals and activists discussed the Bolshevik Revolution and the party's position on African Americans in the South. In 1932 she went to the Soviet Union with a group of Black writers and actors. Louise was known throughout Harlem as "Madame Moscow" for her support of Russia. She formed the Friends of the Soviet Union. She also worked with party leaders in ending job discrimination and demanding unemployment relief during Harlem's Depression years.

Claudia Jones was born in Trinidad and became one of the most respected members of the CPUSA. Jones joined after working with them in the defense of the Scottsboro Brothers. She was a firm believer in the CPUSA's political theory during that period that Blacks in the South constituted an oppressed nation, not just a discriminated race, and consequently they had the right to self-determination. She worked with CPUSA's Women's commission and led Harlem's Council of Unemployed.

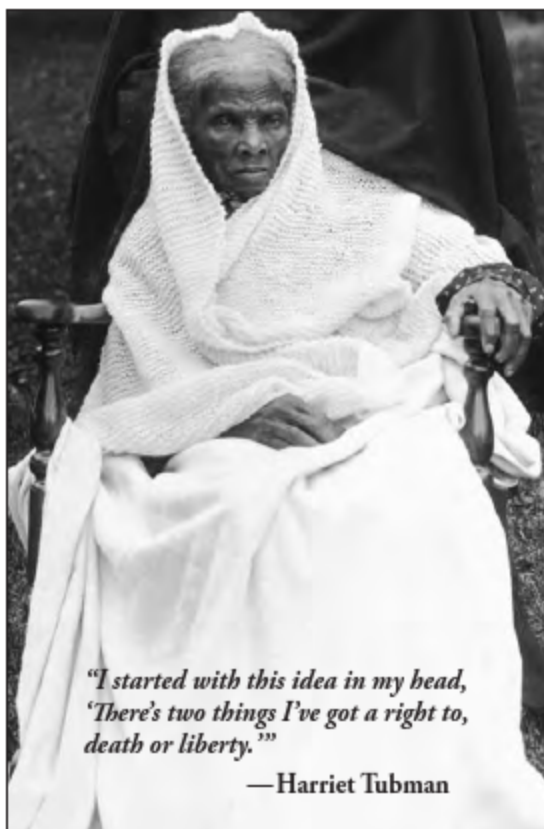
An uncompromising fighter for black liberation, Claudia Jones's life was consumed with struggle. When corporate America exploited Black workers, she fought them. She was a militant defender of sharecroppers, domestics and laborers. She was declared a criminal during the frenzy of the 1950s. She was indicted under the fascist Smith Act and sentenced to prison in New York State. After 10 months in jail, she was released and deported to England as an "undesirable alien." Soon after arriving in England, she fell ill and died. Her imprisonment, deportation and early death demonstrated the lengths to which America would go in silencing radical Black women.

Angela Davis's commitment to the struggle of Black people intensified on Sept. 9, 1963, when four Black girls were murdered in the racist bombing in a Baptist church in Birmingham. Denise McNair, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson were playmates of Angela's sister, Fania. As part of her militant activism, Angela Davis organized rallies and demonstrations defending the political prisoners known as the Soledad Brothers and she herself became a political prisoner.

These are just a few—We are many

We use this month as a spark, but history should be taught all year long—Black History, Mexican History, Asian History, Indigenous people's history, Women's History—the People's History. All people of all nationalities, all cultures have contributed to where we are today and we have to continue to acknowledge this.

We must study our history, what happened in our past, to help us to move on to the future. ✿



*"I started with this idea in my head,
'There's two things I've got a right to,
death or liberty.'"*

—Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman: Woman Warrior

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

July 18, 2002

Born into a family held in bondage in Tidewater, Maryland in (or around) the year 1821, a tiny, brown baby girl named "Araminta" didn't seem like one to shake up the world. The enslaved people on the farm called her 'Minta,' or 'Minty,' when she was a baby, but in the "peculiar institution" called slavery, childhood didn't last long.

It was at the tender age of 5, when 'Minta' was rented out to a white woman nearby for "domestic work." On her first day, before breakfast, the child was lashed with a leather strap four times across her face. By the time she was 7 years old she ran away, tired of her treatment. She was

so tired, and so afraid of being caught, that she fell into a pig-pen, and competed with pigs for scraps of food. When she returned to the house where she worked, some four days later, she was beaten, whipped by a man.

Later, returned to her home farm, she was called Harriet, no longer house slave, but field slave.

As a young woman, she made her way out of the house of bondage, and, not content with her own freedom, she resolved to return to the plantations to lead others out of bondage. She was so successful that she became a living legend to the enslaved, and a thorn in the side of the enslavers. The planters put out a bounty totalling \$40,000 (in 1850 dollars) for her capture, dead or alive.

In the hovels of the enslaved, a whisper of her name ("Moses") or the humming of a spiritual told of her presence and her mission—freedom. She brought over 300 souls north, and built a deep network of informants throughout slave territory.

She so incensed the slavers that they pushed through the federal Fugitive Slave Act which deputized all whites in the pursuit or capture of a former (or escaped) slave, anywhere in the United States. For Harriet, that meant slavery reached up to the Canadian border. So she started taking people up there for a taste of freedom.

She took her job dead seriously. When a captive, tired, scared, or hungry, wanted to turn back to the life he knew, he would find himself staring at a pistol in Harriet's hand, and an offer he couldn't refuse: "Go on with us, or die." There was no turning back.

When Civil War broke out, she left her home in West Canada, and came back down to do whatever she could against the slaveocracy.

With her deep contacts in slave country, she gave important intelligence data to the Union Army, and she personally led several raids against Confederate targets.

One of the most famous was the Combahee River raid, in June 1863. Her contacts on the plantations on the South Carolina coast reported the placement of floating mines in the Combahee to block the Union Navy.

Under her guidance, the mines were removed, railroads and bridges were destroyed, and the Slaveocracy's most precious resource—captives—were liberated from the very heart of the Confederacy. In fact, over 800 of the enslaved were given passage aboard Union ships. It delighted "Moses" to no end, as she would later recall: "I never saw such a scene. We laughed and laughed and laughed. Here you'd see a woman with a pail on her head, rice-a-smoking in it just as she'd taken it from the fire, young one hanging on behind. One woman brought two pigs, a white one and a black one; we took them all on board; named the white pig Beauregard [a Southern general], and the black one Jeff Davis [president of the Confederacy]. Sometimes the women would come with twins hanging around their necks; it appears I never saw so many twins in my life ..."

It seemed she loved few things more than the sight of her people, free. She was a soldier for freedom.

Her words, fueled by a courageous heart, have echoed down the centuries; "I had seen their tears and sighs, and I heard their groans, and I would give every drop of blood in my veins to free them." ♣

Copyright 2002 Mumia Abu-Jamal

St. Denis, France, April 29, 2006, poster from ceremony inaugurating street with the name Mumia Abu-Jamal.



Nigerian women take over ChevronTexaco

By Monica Moorehead

Workers World, Aug. 1, 2002

The quest for reparations by nationally oppressed peoples worldwide takes many forms. But the basis for this fundamental right is universal: just compensation to help bring about long overdue economic and political rights. Bold, heroic actions initiated by a group of African women in recent weeks must be viewed within this context and will certainly inspire the most oppressed everywhere to take similar actions as capitalist greed allows the rich to get richer as the poor get poorer.

Hundreds of Nigerian women staged two separate dramatic takeovers of a U.S.-owned ChevronTexaco oil subsidiary called Escravos west of Lagos, Nigeria's



capitol. Escravos is a former slave pickup site, and the name itself means slave in Portuguese. What a tragic irony.

This takeover included taking a couple of thousand employees and managers hostage. In two separate takeovers, these indigent women virtually brought oil production to a halt. This subsidiary normally produces half a million barrels daily. Nigeria as a whole

produces 1.8 million barrels of oil a day, creating billions in profits for Big Oil.

Why have these women risked their lives to carry out these actions? They simply wanted to force a written agreement from ChevronTexaco, a multi-billion-dollar global conglomerate, that it would provide their communities with electricity, schools, water systems, health clinics and other infrastructure to raise the level of their living standards. The women are also demanding that jobs be provided, including to their unemployed sons, and that pensions be provided for people over the age of 60.

The women protesters also decided to take these actions because, when their male counterparts attempted similar actions, they faced a greater risk of being arrested or physically harmed by police.

This protest took place in the heart of the Niger Delta. Like so much of the African continent, this region is super-abundant in natural resources—in this case oil—but super-underdeveloped because of the legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and neocolonialism. It is considered one of the poorest regions in Africa.

Any commodity production within the developing economies exists mainly for export on the world capitalist market and not to serve the interests of the indigenous population. For instance, Nigeria is the world's sixth-largest exporter of oil and the fifth-largest supplier of oil to the U.S.



'Why do they treat us like animals?'

The first stage of the takeover took place on July 8 when an estimated 150 women took over four stations at the refinery. One of the brilliant tactics the women used was to occupy the aircraft runway, helipad and dock at the facility. No roads lead to this plant—only swamps and rivers. This technological underdevelopment, rooted in imperialist plunder, is the root cause of this protest.

An engineer among the hostages told Agence France-Presse that the women "are complaining that their children have not been given employment. They are not armed or violent. Most of them are women over 45 and there is no way we would lay a finger on them." The majority of the workers in this plant are from the U.S., Canada and England. There are some Nigerian workers as well.

This particular phase of the protest ended on July 17 when protesters won a verbal agreement from ChevronTexaco that their demands would be met.

Another takeover occurred on July 18 by women at four more ChevronTexaco facilities, 50 miles east of the first protest. Their demands were similar to the ones that inspired the first takeover.

These women demanded that the Chevron officials visit their village to see firsthand the unspeakable poverty they have been forced to endure compared to the state-of-the-art hospital, cafeteria, satellite television and other modern conveniences provided for the Chevron employees.

Athonia Okuro, a 28-year-old protester, suffered the loss of her husband from an unknown disease. Her children are chronically sick from mosquito bites that are the main transmission route of malaria. She commented, "I don't know how [Chevron-Texaco] can allow other human beings to live like this. Why do they treat us like animals?" (Associated Press, July 18)

The protesters also charged ChevronTexaco with environmental damage, especially the destruction of fish and cassava crops, both main staples of the Nigerian people, by the flaring up of natural gas.

Anunu Uwawah, a leader of the first takeover, stated, "I give one piece of advice to all women in all countries: they shouldn't let any company cheat them." (Salon, July 19) ♣

Nigerian women's takeover ends in victory



By Monica Moorehead
Workers World, Aug. 8, 2002

Nigerian women protesters who had taken over five fuel stations owned and operated by ChevronTexaco declared victory on July 25. The women said they decided to end their eight-day siege of the stations because management had agreed to meet their demands to build schools and hospitals and

provide jobs, electricity and clean water to their poor villages. It remains to be seen if ChevronTexaco bosses will actually live up to their end of the deal.

This was the second siege of ChevronTexaco within a two-week span. The first took place at the Escravos station when another group of Nigerian women made the same demands on the multi-million-dollar conglomerate. These women won concessions as well.

The women were highly organized during both protests as they blockaded entrances and took hundreds of mainly foreign oil workers hostage. The siege brought oil production to a virtual halt.

The Niger Delta, where both protests took place, is rich in oil reserves. But it is also one of the poorest regions of Africa due to the tragic legacy of colonialism and Western imperialist plunder.

The women understand the despicable role ChevronTexaco plays in taking the precious resource of oil from their community while not helping to create an economic infrastructure for the well-being of everyone in the region. The women used direct action to say, "Enough is enough."

Esther Tolar, one of the protesters, said: "History has been made. Our culture is a patriarchal society. For women to come out like this and achieve what we have is out of the ordinary." ♣



Detroit resolution supports freedom fighter Assata Shakur

The following resolution was unanimously passed by the Detroit City Council on July 27, 2005. The resolution was submitted by Council Member Joann Watson. In Dec. 2006, the City University of New York (CUNY) administration, with the backing of the NYPD and big business media, attempted to change the name of the Assata Shakur/Guillermo Morales Community Center at CCNY in Harlem. Student activists and their supporters continue to mount a struggle to maintain the name of center, founded in 1989, in honor of these two freedom fighters.

WHEREAS, Pervasive and unrelenting police terrorism directed at communities of color during the 1960s made necessary the formation of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense; and

WHEREAS, Numerous dedicated and courageous young people of African ancestry enlisted in the ranks of the Black Panther Party to monitor and deter police violence, and to staff community service programs aimed at providing food, health care, legal assistance, transportation and other services to Black and other poor people living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, One of the committed individuals who joined the Black Panther Party was Assata Shakur; and

WHEREAS, J. Edgar Hoover, then-Director of the FBI, proclaimed that the Black Panther Party was "the greatest threat to the internal security" of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The FBI commenced an illegal campaign of terror against the Black Panther Party that came to be known as "COINTELPRO" (CounterIntelligence Program); and

WHEREAS, In the face of increasing government violence directed at the Black Panther Party and other activists, Assata Shakur became one of many targets of government surveillance, harassment and intimidation; and



Assata Shakur & Monica Moorehead in Havana, Cuba, Aug. 1997.

WHEREAS, On May 2, 1973, Shakur and others in a vehicle in which she was traveling became the victims of racial profiling when they were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, allegedly because of a broken tail-light; and

WHEREAS, Shakur reported that, during the stop, she was shot twice after she had complied with the New Jersey State Troopers' demand that she raise her hands; and

WHEREAS, During the stop, fatal gunshot wounds were sustained by a State Trooper and one of Shakur's companions; and

WHEREAS, Shakur was later charged with both deaths and then tried before an all-white jury; and

WHEREAS, Notwithstanding the fact that defense lawyers presented objective medical and other evidence that substantiated Shakur's contention that her hands were raised when she was shot, she was nevertheless convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment plus 33 years; and

WHEREAS, Shakur reported that she endured torture and continuing threats of violence while in the custody of police and prison officials; and

WHEREAS, Shakur escaped from Clinton Correctional Institution in 1979 after she concluded that her life was in danger and that she had no hope of receiving justice; and

WHEREAS, Even though Shakur was ultimately granted political asylum in Cuba, New Jersey and Federal officials have pursued her relentlessly since her escape; and

WHEREAS, No extradition treaty exists between the United States and Cuba, and consequently there are no legal grounds for demanding Shakur's return to U.S. shores; and

WHEREAS, On May 2, 2005, the U.S. Justice Department announced that it is offering an extraordinary \$1 million bounty for Shakur's capture, notwithstanding the fact that supporters contend that she has been repeatedly denied the following and other human rights recognized under international law: freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention and exile; freedom from torture, and cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment; a presumption of innocence at trial; and the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution; and

WHEREAS, The bounty is likely to encourage illegal and unjustifiable kidnapping attempts that will place Shakur's life in jeopardy; and

WHEREAS, Shakur's supporters have proclaimed Sunday, July 17, 2005 as "International Hands Off Assata Day"; NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, That the City Council for the City of Detroit calls upon the U.S. Justice Department to demonstrate respect for U.S. and international law by immediately withdrawing the offer to pay a \$1 million bounty for the capture of Assata Shakur; AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED, That the City Council for the City of Detroit proclaims its support for "International Hands Off Assata Day" on Sunday, July 17, 2005. ♣

VIII. Why fight-back is inevitable



Black youth: repression & resistance

By LeiLani Dowell

*From a talk on "The State of Black Youth" at a Feb. 2, 2006,
Workers World Party meeting in New York City.*

According to a report by the Census Bureau entitled "The Black Population in the United States: March 2002," Blacks make up 13 percent of the "civilian noninstitutionalized population"—meaning people not in nursing homes or correctional institutions. That they use these figures is interesting to me, because we all know the deplorable numbers of Black men and women in prison today.

Of that 13 percent, 33 percent, according to the Bureau, were under 18. So, that's roughly a third of our population. I want us to remember when we talk about Black youth that we're talking about a third of the Black population.

Blacks accounted for about one quarter of the population in poverty in 2001, with the poverty rate for Black children at 30 percent, compared with 16 percent among all children and 10 percent for white children.

One in three Black men will serve time in prison. In 2000, nearly 30 percent of African Americans aged 18-24 had not completed high school. Black women account for 60 percent of women living with AIDS among women ages 13 to 24. Advocates

for Youth says, "Urban minority female adolescents reported high levels of worry about AIDS, but they reported equal or greater concerns about having enough money to live on, general health, doing well in school, getting pregnant, and getting hurt in a street fight. For these women, HIV risk reduction could be secondary to basic needs, such as housing, food, transportation, and child care."

And we can't have this conversation without mentioning the added hardship Black lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) youth face, as we mark the one-year anniversary of the death of Rashawn Brazell, a 19-year-old bisexual man who was brutally murdered here in New York City. The Working Group on Police and State Violence at the Audre Lorde Project has noted a marked increase in hate crimes against LGBT people of color.



So, here we have it. These statistics translate into real-life hardship for Black youth. And meanwhile, Black youth remain one of the most demonized groups of people in the United States. The blame is always placed on the shoulders of those youth—and their parents—for the plethora

of problems that they face, as opposed to governmental policies and institutionalized racism that began during slavery and continue to this day.

Demonization starts early

When Hurricane Katrina struck, and the world saw every level of government doing nothing to help the mostly Black people in the region, who did the media use as a diversion first? Black youth, specifically young Black men, who were derided for "looting."

And the demonization starts as early as grammar school. In March of last year, two police officers entered an elementary school in St. Petersburg, Fla., after school officials called them to deal with a 5-year-old Black girl who was being disruptive and punched a school official. Video footage shows her calm down before the officers approached, pinned her arms behind her back and put her in handcuffs. She was put in the back of a police car and had her feet restrained as well after, cops say, she tried to kick out the window. Police officials later said that the officers had committed an error of judgment but that they did not violate policy.

Two days after the incident in Florida, the assistant principal at P.S. 34 in Queens, N.Y., made her 13 Haitian students sit on the floor and eat their rice and beans with their hands. She screamed at them, in front of the rest of the students in the lunchroom, "In Haiti they treat you like animals and I will treat you the same way here." Later the principal pulled the students out of class, tried to convince them it never happened, and offered some of them ice cream if they changed their stories.

Most recently, in January, officials in the Brockton Public School District in Massachusetts suspended a six-year-old Haitian boy from an elementary school for the outrageous charge of "sexual harassment." [See Feb. 28 issue of *Workers World*]

I know the last three examples are focused on children, and not technically youth. These are just the reported and most outrageous cases. Who knows how much psychological trauma is inflicted on Black youth, considered a "lost cause" by many authorities in schools across the country? The psychological wounds from incidents like these will stick with a person throughout their youth, if not longer, especially when we consider the lack of health care, including counseling, for many Black children. This demonization continues throughout their lives, with "zero tolerance" policies, police brutality, attacks on affirmative action, discrimination and so on.

Resistance

In spite of all the very real hardships that Black youth face, and the demonization on top of that, Black youth are still resistant. Let's state for the record that just surviving in a system that has placed all the odds against you is resisting. Often even the most well-meaning will overlook the resistance that Black youth undertake every day.

An article by researcher Cathy Cohen points out, "young African Americans ... have been ... active and instrumental in ... movements and politics. Whether it is the Black Power movement, the anti-apartheid movement, or the organized mobilization against mass incarceration, African American youth have been and continue to be at the center of these efforts, providing leadership, analysis, and energy."

She continues, "Many African American young people find themselves at the center of many national political struggles and are, therefore, politicized at a much earlier age than more privileged youth. Increased access to information through the internet, television, and popular culture, as well as the constant presence of the state... means that the age of political engagement... is spiraling downward.... Many African American youth engage with the state on a regular basis through state-run health care policies... through their own experiences or their children's experience in the public schools ... and through encounters with the police. Thus, [we] are sorely mistaken if we proceed as if young people, who are often the targets of institutional and state campaigns, programs and policies, do not have strong opinions about and take action to better their position in society, their life chances, and the distribution of power in their communities and the country."

And doesn't this make perfect sense? It's absurd to think that Black youth aren't politically active. Many don't have a choice. They are propelled into activism by the attack of the state on their lives. I'm reminded of the Somerville 5 in Massachusetts as a case in point—five young Black men who have had to become activists around their own lives after they were brutally assaulted by police officers in an unprovoked attack, and then expelled from school before their cases were even heard.

Music is also used by many Black youth as a form of resistance. It's a regular occur-

rence in my life that I'm approached by some young brother on the subway, selling their own political, conscious music, music they tell me they created to educate and inspire others to action.

But the activism among Black youth isn't isolated from a connection to the global struggle for justice. In the past two years, I've been on delegations to Cuba with the Venceremos Brigade, and Venezuela for the World Youth Festival. And each time I was pleasantly surprised by the number of Black youth that were on these delegations—not because I thought that youth of color wouldn't be in solidarity with Cuba and Venezuela, or revolutionary youth from around the world. I was surprised because we all know that it's not exactly cheap to travel to another part of the world. To do so takes real dedication, fundraising, taking time off jobs or school, etc. With Cuba there's the added pressure that one can face huge fines or even jail time upon returning to the United States.

In Venezuela one of the most moving things to me was the reception of the United States delegation by the other youth delegations. We were told time and time again, "We do not consider you to be your country. You are under the gun yourselves, and you are resisting, and you are our sisters and brothers." And I just think about how energizing that was for me, and how energizing it must have been for some of these youth who have probably been demonized most of their lives.

So what's the state of Black youth? Well, it's not a pretty state—there's hardship, and brutality, and sorrow at every turn—from the most subtle to the most institutionalized racism, sexism, homophobia and violence. But there's a light at the end of the tunnel, and that's those youth themselves, making change and taking their lives back. ♣

Behind police tactic 'Racial profiling aims to divide workers'

By Julius Dykes

From a talk at a Buffalo, N.Y.,

Workers World Party forum, Sept. 16, 2000.



In 1942, over 120,000 Americans were stripped of their businesses and their homes and incarcerated for the duration of World War II. They had committed no offense. They were convicted of no crime. They were suspected, subjected to curfews, arrested, had their property confiscated and were imprisoned because of the color of their skin and their national origin or the national origin of their parents.

The internment of Japanese Americans in 1942 was an egregious example of what can happen when skin color and

national origin are substituted for evidence and become, by themselves, a basis for suspicion and punishment.

But it was not the only egregious example. During the time of the internment, Jim Crow laws and formal racial segregation existed in the South and were so reified that virtually no one could imagine it ending.

Today, the internment of U.S. citizens of Japanese descent is nearly universally recognized as something shameful—an act of war hysteria and racism. Similarly, few today are prepared to defend the formality of Jim Crow laws.

But on highways and streets, in airports and at customs checkpoints, skin color, irrespective of economic class, is once again being used by law enforcement officials as a cause for suspicion and a sufficient reason to violate people's rights.

Tool of racist repression

First of all, let's establish right from the beginning that racial profiling is and always has been just another racist, repressive tool of the state to keep Black people and other people of color oppressed, intimidated, in fear and always in the midst of a potential frame-up.

This policy, like many other anti-people policies, has been intensified in the past decade or so for various reasons.

One of the main reasons is to feed the ever-growing prison-for-profit system.

Another is the fact that more and more people are coming into political consciousness and seeing this rotten corrupt system for what it is, and resisting it!

And this practice of profiling can serve as a subtle means to divide us and leave us all vulnerable.

Racial profiling may be a relatively new term, but it's definitely an old concept. Tracey Maclin, a professor at Boston University School of Law, says that the problem of "driving while Black" can trace its historical roots to a time in early U.S. society when court officials in cities like Philadelphia permitted constables and ordinary citizens the right to "take up" all Black persons seen "gadding abroad" without their master's permission.

And what are the consequences of racial profiling for African Americans—or Asians, Arabs, Latinos—as a matter of local, state or federal government practice?

1976: Supreme Court upholds profiling

In 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court supported the actions of the U.S. Border Patrol agents who selected cars for inspection in Southern California partly on the basis that drivers were of Mexican descent.

The Supreme Court maintained that since the intrusions by the U.S. agents on selected drivers were "quite limited" and only involved "a brief detention of travelers during which all that is required ... is a response to a brief question or two and possibly the production of a document," the practice was upheld.

And recently in upstate New York, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled that police officers did not violate the Constitution when they stopped every Black man in Oneonta on Sept. 4, 1992, after a white woman said she had been attacked in her home by a young Black man.

The controversy surrounding racial profiling is intense. In the national spotlight are two New Jersey state troopers, John Hogan and James Kenna. They were indicted on Sept. 7, 1999, on attempted-murder and assault charges resulting from a shooting during a routine traffic stop on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1998 that left three of the four unarmed young Black and Latino men involved seriously wounded.

The troopers were also indicted earlier that year on 19 misdemeanor charges of falsifying their activity logs to conceal the disproportionate number of minority drivers they were accused of stopping on the highway.

When you look at the disproportionate profiling of Blacks and Latinos, you can clearly see that it equates Blacks with crime, with wrong-doings of some sort.

And in recent years, this guise has been the "War on Drugs," which is no more than a mass frame-up of African Americans and other people of color.

The real 'drug dealers'

In the 1970s, when tons of heroin were being shipped from Southeast Asia and brought into the United States, we saw poor communities throughout the U.S. addicted to heroin. This enabled the ruling class to further destabilize and exploit African Americans and label them criminals. And this gave the ruling class a political justification to wage war against Black people.

But we know who the real drug dealers are. We know it's this U.S. government that makes arms deals and drug deals with puppet governments set up by U.S. imperialism in Third World countries. And we also know it's the big U.S. banks that launder the drug money.

But you and I are supposed to believe that Black youths are somehow responsible for bringing drugs into this country. I read an article that was written in the 1980s that said that at that time the drug trade was worth more than \$300 billion a year. So you know it's worth a lot more than that by now.

But you and I are supposed to believe that somehow, over \$300 billion a year is coming through the projects within the Black communities of this country. That's absurd! It's insanity!

But unfortunately, when this racial profiling and stereotypical thinking starts to seep into the minds of our working class—through fake cop shows and fabricated crime statistics about Blacks and other people of color—this becomes a real threat to our movement: It can divide us.

Because this whole issue of racial profiling, just like all the other racist policies, reinforces white supremacist ideology that is rooted in capitalist society. That's why it's imperative that white progressives come out in full force against this policy.

Ultimately the police, as a force of repression against the majority, must be eradicated along with the whole capitalist state—branch and root! ✿

AIDS & poverty

Workers World editorial, Dec. 13, 2001

More than two decades into the AIDS pandemic, with more than 20 million lives having been lost worldwide and the disease spreading most rapidly wherever there is deep poverty and social instability, the countries hit hardest are in Africa. Why then did some of the U.S. media choose the occasion of World AIDS Day to focus in on the government of South Africa as the villain in the epidemic and accuse the people of that country of being promiscuous, irresponsible, sexually predatory and uninformed? That was the message of feature articles in many prominent U.S. newspapers.

This is a classic case of shifting the burden of guilt from those who are ultimately responsible for the toll that AIDS is taking in South Africa onto the backs of its victims.

The pharmaceutical giants bear direct blame for pricing AIDS drugs out of the reach of most African workers and poor. In fact, United Nations figures show that anti-retroviral therapy alone would cost countries like Bangladesh, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia roughly 30 percent of their respective gross national products.

But the drug companies have not acted alone. The government in Washington has been their closest ally. When the South African government tried to make cheaper generic AIDS drugs in an attempt to save many lives, the drug companies dragged its officials into court. And let no one forget that it was Democrat Al Gore—chair of the United States/South Africa Binational Commission—who acted as point person for these greedy imperialist goliaths.

Only after a worldwide outcry did the U.S. government and the pharmaceuticals relent somewhat and “allow” South Africa to import cheaper generic drugs from India.

These pharmaceuticals are a part of the class-driven economic system that has ravaged the African continent and helped lay the basis for a public health crisis that hits people with AIDS the hardest.

Essential for the health of all individuals—especially people with AIDS—is access to clean water and good nutrition. Yet 50 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa do not have clean water and 32 percent of children under five years old are malnourished. How can they afford AIDS medications, or even condoms?

This poverty is not universal. Even though apartheid has ended and the African National Congress presides over the government, privileged whites still own 87 percent of the land in South Africa. The same bankers, mine owners and industrialists still control the reins of the economy.

For decades, South African miners have been forced to live in hostels far from their

families, while they dig out the precious gold and diamonds. These are then ostentatiously displayed in ads in the same magazines and newspapers here that accuse the men of that country of not displaying appropriate "family values."

Colonialism, apartheid and now economic subjugation to U.S. imperialism have resulted in a system of low wages and intense exploitation. These combined conditions make it very difficult for the South African government to meet the needs of the masses of workers and poor.

Put the burden of guilt back where it belongs: on the poverty resulting from more than a century of oppression. Racist articles like those in the U.S. press add vicious insult to injury. The banks and corporations that have grown rich off African labor and resources owe a massive debt of reparations to South Africa and its sister countries. Imagine how much easier it would be to deal with a public health crisis if that obligation were paid in full.

That's not likely to happen without revolutionary changes here and in Africa. But that would be subversive of Bush's New World Order, wouldn't it? ☚

U.S. capitalism puts oppressed nations and the poor behind bars

By Monica Moorehead

From the pamphlet, "Mumia Speaks" August 2000

On Nov. 14, 1998, a conference on "Wrongful Convictions and the Death Penalty" was held in Illinois. The conference was a stunning affirmation that the so-called justice system in the United States is completely awry.

Twenty-eight women and men of all nationalities testified. They all had been on death row in different parts of the country. They came together to tell their horror stories.

Each had been wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death. Only through the pressure of volunteers, family members and independent research outside the justice system were they able to win their freedom.

Most of their cases had been fought before President Clinton signed the 1996 Effective Death Penalty Act. This new law makes overturning death sentences even harder. Under it, most of those at the conference might have already been executed.

On Feb. 4, 1999, four plainclothes cops in the borough of the Bronx in New York attacked a young African immigrant in the vestibule of his home. They fired 41 shots. Nineteen hit Amidou Diallo of Guinea, killing him instantly. Diallo was unarmed, completely innocent of any crime, and had only a wallet in his pants.

The cops said they thought his wallet was a gun. On Feb. 25, 2000, all four cops were acquitted of any crime.

In February 2000, the prison population in the United States—which was under 300,000 in the early 1970s—reached 2 million inmates. This makes the U.S. the greatest prisonhouse on the planet.

The U.S. establishment has expanded the repressive state apparatus over the past few decades in three main areas—capital punishment, police aggressiveness, and by establishing what has been called the “prison-industrial complex.”

This growing repression has aroused resistance. Thousands of people defied police to take the streets in New York to protest the Diallo verdict. Hundreds more in Washington and San Francisco took civil-disobedience arrests to demand a new trial for death-row inmate and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Meanwhile, a movement was gaining momentum around the country to declare a moratorium on executions.

Racism and fascism

The expansion of police powers can't be separated from the ruling-class ideology of racism. Right-wing politicians made “law and order” a major electoral issue, with being “tough on crime” meaning virtually the same as being hard on the Black community.

While the pressure has been from the right-wing racists, both Republican and Democratic administrations have approved this increased repression. These officials took funds from education and other social benefits and transferred it to the police and the prisons. Both far-right and centrist capitalist politicians and even those considered political liberals have encouraged this development.

The U.S. ruling class of billionaires and bankers has given full backing to the increase in prisoners. It has become the accepted plant for controlling the masses of the people at a time when the gap between rich and poor grows ever wider in this country and in the world. It is in place in anticipation of wider revolt when the current capitalist expansion gives way to a collapse.

The U.S. rulers grew rich by exploiting enslaved labor and pillaging Native land. Racism was the ideology used in an attempt to justify these thefts. It is thus no surprise that the communities of color—African American, Latino, Native and Asian—bear the brunt of the vicious police attacks and the weight of the prison walls.

Repression in the U.S. seems to have little in common with that of classical fascism. There is not devastating economic crisis. There are no extralegal Nazi storm troopers and even the Ku Klux Klan—the U.S. equivalent of the Nazi gangs—seems to play a minor role today. Instead, police and courts carry out the repression under the cover of bourgeois legality.

But in communities of color the police operate like a fascist gang. They are the occupying army of an internal colony. And the prisons are concentration camps for the poor and oppressed.

Bourgeois democracy is but a form of capitalist rule. After all is said and done, capitalist democracy serves the rich and the super-rich. The explosion of the prison-industrial complex exposes the utter bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy and the

deepening repression that it heaps upon the poor, especially people of color. The facts speak for themselves.

At the end of February 2000, two Black Texas death-row inmates, Ponchai Kamau Wilkerson and Howard Guidry, took a guard hostage for 13 hours. They were justified in their action. They had nothing to lose and everything to gain by carrying out this heroic act.

Kamau was an articulate 28-year-old man who was a secretary of defense of Panthers United for Revolutionary Education, an organization of Texas death-row prisoners who studied Marxism and revolution.

What were the main demands of these two men? First to have an independent investigation into inhumane living conditions on death row. The other was for Texas Gov. George W. Bush to issue a moratorium on executions in Texas.

Despite mobilizations across the country and in Texas itself, and while courageously fighting tooth and nail to the last minute, Ponchai Kamau Wilkerson was executed on March 14, 2000.

The death penalty

There are 3,600 people awaiting execution in the United States. The state of Texas is second only to California with over 460 people on death row, but is executing more people at a faster rate, sometimes three or four a week. Bush has presided over 123 executions in six years, earning him the nickname "Governor Death."

In 1972, following five years without executions, the Supreme Court ruled capital punishment unconstitutional. This victory followed the upsurge of the civil-rights movement. But in 1977, the high court reinstated the death penalty, despite arguments that it was not only "cruel and unusual punishment" but was racially biased.

At first, the rate of executions was slow. The first inmate executed even said publicly that he wanted to die. But then the executions gathered momentum until in the late 1990s about 100 a year were being officially murdered.

In June 1998, the Death Penalty Information Center published a study on the racist character of the death penalty. A white person charged with murder is more likely to get life in prison than the death penalty. The DPIC states: "Race is more likely to affect death sentencing than smoking affects the likelihood of dying from heart disease."

The report revealed that in Philadelphia, for example, the odds of receiving a death sentence are nearly four times higher if the defendant is Black. In courtrooms around the country, contemptible racial slurs abound and go unchallenged. Many racist remarks are made in front of juries by judges and lawyers, including by the defendants' lawyers.

One DPIC illustration: "When a prosecutor refers to a Hispanic defendant as a 'chili-eating bastard,' as happened in Colorado death-penalty case, it sets a tone of acceptance of racial prejudice for the entire trial." Acts like the following are common: A prosecutor in Alabama said that he barred several potential jurors because they were affiliated with a predominantly Black university. A reviewing court considered this "race neutral."

In Philadelphia, Assistant District Attorney Jack McMahon used a training video for new prosecutors instructing them on how to exclude Black jurors. In 16 of McMahon's cases, Black jurors were struck from the jury four times as often as others. McMahon has prosecuted 36 murder cases. Some of those defendants are on death row today.

The race of the murder victim is a determinant of the death penalty. Black people and Latinos are more likely to go to death row if accused of killing whites. In Kentucky, for example, 100 percent of the inmates in 1996 were on death row for allegedly killing white victims. None was there for the murder of a Black victim.

According to the DPIC, in the entire history of the United States only 38 whites have been executed for murdering Black people.

Some groups are for abolition of capital punishment because of the barbarity of the practice. Some give priority to combating its racist bias. For communists, it is also a class issue in a capitalist country like the United States.

The capitalists uphold the death penalty because they will use anything at their disposal to intimidate the working class. Their aim is to maintain rule, and the death penalty serves their aim by deepening and broadening repression. As long as the death penalty is a tool of the capitalist class against the workers, the working-class movement must oppose it.

After years of struggle by the families, friends and supporters of death-row prisoners to abolish the inhuman and racist system of executions, huge cracks have appeared in what was a ruling-class united front for the death penalty. A moratorium on executions issued by Illinois Gov. George Ryan on Jan. 31, 2000, has given renewed hope to the national campaign to end the death penalty.

The governor was forced to take the action after a 13th death-row prisoner was exonerated. Twelve people have been executed in the state since 1990. Ryan, who earlier championed the death penalty, now says he can no longer defend the system. Following his decision, activist groups have moved other legislatures to consider declaring a moratorium in their states.

This is a positive development revolutionaries and Marxists welcome. Right now, the struggle to win a moratorium on executions appears to be taking place within



The case of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal has come to symbolize the racism of the U.S. "injustice" system. In France he is celebrated as an honorary citizen of Paris. The poster above was made for the inauguration of a street named for him in St. Denis, a working-class suburb of Paris.

the electoral arena. The struggle to win a moratorium to temporarily put a halt to the death machine should become a grassroots issue. But even if this struggle has to begin from the top, it does provide activists with an opening for struggle.

One reason for this debate is the growing concern among capitalist politicians and think tanks over the U.S. image. This country has the most people in prison and an alarming rate of poor people, especially people of color, being executed.

Police brutality, killer cops

Police brutality is an institution that is as widespread and deeply rooted in capitalist society as exploitation itself. Indeed, exploitation cannot be maintained without police. And wherever there are police there is racism and brutality.

When cases such as those of Amadou Diallo, Abner Louima or Rodney King break into the headlines because police have been caught in the act red-handed, the capitalist establishment feigns outrage and shock. But this is strictly for the benefit of the public.

Year after year, the bosses dish out hefty salaries, large budgets and high honors to police chiefs and commanders across the country. These chiefs and commanders in turn administer and cover up for the armies of cops in every municipality and township, large and small, that brutalize the oppressed peoples and the working class on a daily basis.

A recent Human Rights Watch report, "Shielded from Justice: Police Brutality and Accountability in the United States," focused on police brutality in a sample of 14 cities.

This relatively modest study compiled enough information on police brutality to lead to massive criminal prosecutions of cops at all levels. That is, it would have if the establishment had the least interest in abolishing police brutality instead of covering it up.

For example, the U.S. government, always on the lookout for so-called "human rights violations" by governments that Washington is trying to undermine or overthrow, could have started the search in any city in the U.S. A look at a few of the biggest cities involved gives the picture.

Torture in Chicago

In Chicago 65 incidents of police torture were documented between the years of 1972 and 1991. They included the use of electric shock applied to suspects' genitals and other parts of their bodies, burning a suspect on a hot radiator, and psychological torture techniques by and under the supervision of a Commander Jon Bunge. No one was ever prosecuted.

Some of the cops who took part in the torture were retired with full benefits. Another was recommended for valor by the mayor and promoted to captain from lieutenant.

In 1996 there were 3,000 complaints against the Chicago police, most by Black and Latino residents, for brutality, racist treatment and abuse of authority. In only

six cases did the authorities even consider dismissing the cops. And then no one was dismissed.

In Los Angeles, according to HRW, “the videotaped beating of Rodney King exemplified so much that was (and in some cases still is) wrong with the LAPD... Many of the components of the King incident are common to less-publicized abuse cases. There was the obvious race factor... The beating followed a vehicle pursuit, and once stopped, the defendant was not considered compliant enough—a common scenario in police beating. When the man who videotaped the beating and King’s brother... attempted to report the incident, they were turned away or ignored. Inaccurate reports were filed by the police.

“Three out of the four officers eventually indicted... had been named in prior complaints... In fact, it is likely that, if this incident had not been videotaped and broadcast widely, any complaint about the beating would not have been sustained, since the sustained rate for complaints... was about 2 percent.”

According to the HRW report, Black people and Latinos are still routinely “proned out”—that is, made to lie face down with their arms and legs spread—just for walking the streets or driving in their vehicles. The vicious K-9 dogs trained to bite are still used to terrorize people. Many of the killer cops identified by the Christopher Commission after the Los Angeles rebellion are not only still on the force, but two have shot and killed people since. Chief Parks ignored the commission’s mild recommendation.

In New York City in 1992, Mayor David Dinkins appointed the Mollen Commission to investigate corruption in the NYPD after cops in the 30th, 9th, 46th, 75th and 73rd precincts were caught selling drugs and beating people to keep them from talking.

“What emerged,” wrote the HRW report, “was a picture of how everyday brutality corrupted relations among police officers and city residents. The Mollen Commission heard from officers who admitted pouring ammonia on the face of a detainee... from another who threw garbage and boiling water on someone hiding in a dumb-waiter shaft.

“Another... doctored an ‘escape rope’ used by drug dealers so they would plunge to the ground... and the same group also raided a brothel while in uniform... and terrorized and raped the women there. Mollen found ‘Brutality... sometimes serves as a rite of passage to other forms of corruption and misconduct.’”

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, like Chief Parks in L.A., disregarded the mild measures of oversight recommended by the Mollen Commission. These recommendations are never mandatory, legally binding, but are basically window dressing.

Since then in New York, Abner Louima has been tortured, Amadou Diallo was shot down in a hail of 41 bullets, and Anthony Baez was choked to death. These are just the most notorious of the cops’ crimes.

“Philadelphia’s police,” reported HRW, “are grappling with the latest of the corruption scandals that have earned them one of the worst reputations of big city police departments in the United States... [There is] an undisturbed culture of impunity

that surfaces and is renewed with each successive scandal, as each new generation of police officers is taught through example that their leadership accepts corruption and excessive force.

"As a result, police officers... have unlawfully injured and killed citizens, the city has paid enormous sums in settlements and awards" and many minority communities are distrustful of police officers, who too often act like criminals. The shortcomings of the department are reinforced by a police union that tirelessly defends officers accused of human-rights violation."

This is the police force that made the case against Mumia Abu-Jamal and made sure no one would testify in his behalf at his trial.

The HRW report has similar reports about "liberal" San Francisco and smaller cities like New Orleans, Minneapolis, Providence, Rhode Island, Portland, Ore., and others. It leaves out some of the even more notorious police departments in the South and Southwest, such as Houston, Phoenix, Dallas or Birmingham.

It leaves our Louisville, Ky., where the police in March 2000 attempted a fascist-like revolt against a mayor who fired the police chief.

But the picture painted is sufficiently clear to issue an indictment against the entire police establishment, the politicians who appoint them and cover up for them, and the ruling class that promotes the system of police terror against the population.

It is absolutely naïve to regard this virtually universal existence of police brutality as something "out of control," something that has escaped the supervision of the authorities, a result of poor administration.

The art of administration has been brought to its highest pinnacle of development by U.S. capitalism. Wall Street and the Fortune 500 can administer global empires that stagger the imagination. They can summon armies of efficiency experts at a moment's notice when it comes to downsizing the workforce or merging giant monopolies.

If the ruling class were so inclined, it could wipe out police brutality. These bosses and bankers, the millionaires and billionaires control the arteries of political and economic life, the big-business parties and the state and local governments throughout the country.

But the very idea they would put a stop to the intimidation and terror practiced against the workers and the oppressed is like expecting them to voluntarily cut off their right hand.

The cops are there to make sure that during this great Wall Street boom there is no rebellion by the masses of people. The workers' wages are getting relatively lower, their working hours are getting longer, and they are forced to give up social services like health care, welfare, childcare, education and housing to serve the balanced budget of the bond holders, the military-industrial complex and the Pentagon.

The cops are there to feed the prison-industrial complex with Black and Latino youths who can't get jobs on the outside but are forced to work at slave wages on the inside.

It is impossible to regard the phenomenon of police brutality as anything other

than a systematic policy of the ruling class to intimidate by force and violence the millions of oppressed people, both in and out of the work force.

As such, it must be opposed by an equally systematic organization of the masses into a powerful force that can defend itself against the terror. Commissions, review boards, government investigations of every kind always leave the same parasitic and brutal structure intact after all the publicity is over. The communities, the unions, the movement are still left to face the cops.

The working class and community organizations must ultimately organize to defend themselves against these cowardly hired thugs of capitalism.

The prison-industrial complex

The United States has only 5 percent of the world's population but has 25 percent of the world's incarcerated. That amounts to 2 million people. This number includes 130,000 in federal prisons, about 1.2 million in state prisons and almost 700,000 in city and county jails, where people are held for short terms or are awaiting trial. An unknown number of people are under house arrest, confined by means of electronic monitoring devices.

In Texas alone, since George W. Bush became governor in 1994, the prison population increased from 41,000 to 150,000. These convictions came about mainly for drug possession. The irony is that it's an open secret that Bush himself is a former drug user.

Sixty percent of those in federal prisons are drug offenders with no history of committing violent acts. While 60 percent to 80 percent of all prisoners have a substance addiction, only one out of 10 inmates receives any kind of drug treatment in prison. In addition, 70 percent of the prisoners in the U.S. are functionally illiterate.

In a July 1999 report, the Justice Department estimated that some 16 percent of prisoners are mentally ill. This makes over 300,000 inmates of the country's federal and state prisons and local jails who either had a history of mental disease or had stayed overnight in mental hospitals at some time in their lives. An additional 547,800 mentally ill people are on probation in the community. So the so-called criminal-justice system has major responsibility in providing—or in criminally neglecting to provide—mental-health care for close to a million people.

The Justice Policy Institute report entitled "The Punishing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates of the Millennium" includes the latest numbers and trends in incarceration from the U.S. Justice Department. The JPI report illustrates how the U.S. prison population grew at a faster rate during the 1990s than during any other previous decade.

By the end of the year 2000, there will be 2.07 million people behind bars.

Looking now at subgroups, a federal study done by the General Accounting Office reports that there were twice as many women incarcerated during the 1990s as the decade before. This indicates an even faster growth than for the male prison population. Most of these women are serving time for what are called nonviolent drug crimes.

These women prisoners suffer a higher rate of HIV infection and mental illness than imprisoned men. Eight-four percent of female federal inmates and 60 percent of female state inmates are mothers. Because of systematic racism, Black women are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than white women. Latinas have a higher rate of incarceration as well, compared to the overall population. And more women prisoners are courageously coming forward to report that they are victims of sexual abuse and rape at the hands of male guards.

Prisons for profit

Prisons have little to do with “crime prevention” and everything to do with repression and exploitation. The prison-industrial complex is an integral component of the globalization phenomenon of raking in super-profits for Wall Street investors during this post-Soviet, imperialist expansion era.

This current boom comes about mainly with the privatization of prisons and the youth, primarily African American and Latino, are the main targets. For instance, since 1991, while the rate of violent acts has decreased by 20 percent, the number of people in prison has increased by 50 percent. According to the U.S. Department of Justice 1997 statistics, “violent juvenile crime” has declined by 9.3 percent but the population of youthful juveniles in privately operated facilities has increased more than 10 percent.

Even as prisons are privatized, the U.S. government is spending more money on jails than ever before. In 1996, Washington spent more money on prison construction than on university construction—almost a billion dollars. This was the same year that President Bill Clinton signed away welfare.

A study called “The Color of Justice” substantiated that within the California juvenile system youths of color are twice as likely as white youths to be tried under the same rules as adults, which subjects them to harsher sentences.

California has one of the biggest prison systems in the world, with more people incarcerated than Belgium, France, Great Britain, Germany and Japan combined. The number of prisoners has grown from 19,600 in 1977 to over 160,000 at the end of 1998. California is also notorious for its law that sentences those convicted three times for a felony—that is, for a higher level crime—to an automatic life sentence with no hope of parole—the “three-strikes-and-out” law.

Study co-author Dan Macallister wrote: “Discrimination against kids of color accumulates at every stage of the justice system and skyrockets when juveniles are tried as adults. California has a double standard: throw kids of color behind bars, but rehabilitate white kids who commit comparable crimes.” Los Angeles County produces 40 percent of the juvenile-court cases that make it to the adult courts.

The study showed that of the 24,000 young people arrested there in 1996, 56 percent were Latino, 25 percent were Black, 12 percent white and 6 percent Asian.

Of the 561 cases that made it to adult court, 59 percent were Latino, 30 percent Black, 6 percent Asian and 5 percent white. Compared to whites, Black youths were

18.4 times more likely to be convicted, Latino youths were 7.3 times more likely, and Asian youths were 4.5 times more likely to be jailed. The study pointed out that in Texas, Black and Latino youths make up just one-half of the state's youth population but they make up 80 percent of imprisoned youths—and 100 percent of juveniles housed in adult jails.

The disproportion is even more astounding considering there are equivalent drug-abuse problems in white communities and communities of color. And so much of the jailing is drug related.

Just from these statistics alone, we can see the role that racist repression plays in the social composition of who is incarcerated. But this still remains a political and social symptom of this crisis. It also has an economic basis that drives it forward.

The bottom line is this: under capitalism, investors and bankers will put their money into any sector of the economy, no matter how anti-human it may be, in order to maximize profits. This is not a matter of policy but is based on the independent laws of capitalist development that drive big business to gravitate to wherever the rate of profit is the highest.

The cost of prison construction has averaged annually for the past decade a staggering \$7 billion a year. The U.S. government has spent more money on prisons than building universities. It costs \$35 billion dollars annually for incarceration. That figure is expected to rise to \$41 billion by the end of 2000. If one counts all prison labor as working for the same firm, the prison industry is the second largest employer in the country with 523,000 employees, second only to General Motors.

Starbucks, Microsoft, Victoria's Secret, Best Western and Boeing are examples of U.S. corporations that super-exploit prison labor.

World Research Groups, a New York-based investment firm, summed up the corporate takeover of correctional facilities this way: "While arrests and convictions are steadily on the rise, profits are to be made—profits from crime. Get in on the ground floor of this booming industry now."

Prison slave labor

Profits arise not just from prison construction or management, but also from prison labor. Between 1980 and 1994 the value of goods prisoners produced rose from \$392 million to \$1.1 billion. The Corrections Corporation of America, the country's largest private-prison conglomerate, is a main factor. CCA operates 46 penal institutions in 11 states, including seven juvenile facilities. Its stock value climbed from \$8 a share in 1992 to \$30 a share in 1997. One investment firm called CCA stock "the theme stock of the 90s."

Transnational corporations no longer have to shut down factories here and go abroad to set up sweatshop conditions—not with super-cheap labor locked up right there in the next state. "Competitive prison labor" means a CCA prison in Tennessee can pay prisoners a maximum "wage" of 50 cents an hour.

In Ohio, prisoners make car parts for Honda for \$2 an hour while the average wage for a unionized worker at Honda is \$20 to \$30 an hour. In Oregon, prisoners slave for \$3 a day no matter what the industry, and this slavery has been “legalized.” Trans World Airlines can pay prisoners \$5 an hour to book reservations by phone—one-third of what it pays to its non-inmate workers.

The multi-billion-dollar prison industry has now expanded to manufacture clothes, car parts, computer components, shoes and golf balls. Starbucks, Microsoft, Victoria’s Secret, Best Western and Boeing are examples of U.S. corporations that super-exploit prison labor. It was especially gratifying to see the youth in Seattle during the World Trade Organization meeting trashing Starbucks. Starbucks’ prison workers can’t even afford to buy their coffee.

Wall Street is not alone in terms of making super-profits off of prison labor. There is the Federal Prison Industries, Inc., a unit of the Justice Department, which “employs” 21,000 inmates in federal prisons. This corporation pays inmates anywhere between 23 cents to \$1.15 an hour. Last year, FPI reported \$540 million dollars in sales to its only customers—federal agencies. This captive labor force manufactures electronic components, furniture and clothing.

Union jobs threatened

A captive work force can make super-profits for local, state and national governments—and slave labor can be pitted against other workers with better-paying jobs.

There is growing concern, especially among labor unions, that FPI will become more and more privatized. In fact, the FPI board of directors has proposed that it expand its services and products to the private sector. Shouldn’t the unions make it their business to organize prisoners and demand union wages and conditions, so they can’t be used as scab labor?

There is a bill before Congress called the Prison Industries Reform Act. The act has the backing of corporations and many Republicans. If passed, this act will allow the Federal Prison Industries to compete directly for private contracts while phasing out its seven-year relationship with the government. The bill’s sponsors want to lure factories back from abroad to super-exploit prison labor at home.

The federal prison population is expected to increase by 50 percent by the year 2006 from its current 130,000 to 200,000. This expected increase is due to the severity of prison sentences for drug convictions, the elimination of parole at the federal level and the lack of drug rehabilitation. This means more cheap labor to super-exploit.

All the repressive arms of the state work hand in hand to build up this imprisoned army of the unemployed and the sky is the limit. The courts play their part by providing incompetent defense lawyers for poor suspects, railroading innocent people to jail or handing out harsh terms for minor and non-violent drug offenses.

Then there are those waiting to be jailed. In a December 1998 Atlantic Monthly article, it was reported that the backlog of arrest warrants stands at 2.6 million people because of overcrowding in the prisons.

The prison expansion is spiraling out of control. A sector of the capitalist class has a big stake in continuing to enrich itself on the state-subsidized prison industry. Prison expansion has also had a big impact in impoverished rural areas. With devastating layoffs in other industries, prison construction has created an economic boom in correction jobs and related industries.

Reform the prisons?

There are some immediate plans in the work to help reform prison conditions. For instance, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton from Washington, D.C., has submitted three bills in response to the increase of women in federal prisons. One bill will require those states receiving federal funding for prison construction to submit a plan on how they propose to provide health and other services for women inmates.

Another bill would require the Bureau of Prisons to utilize existing prison funding to establish two pilot community-based facilities in the Washington area for non-violent, short-term, pregnant offenders. And a third bill would establish sentencing alternatives in the federal system, such as allowing first time non-violent offenders to serve their sentences at a community-based facility.

A fight for prison reforms is progressive, especially if there is a struggle from below. But looking at the situation in its totality, these three bills, if Congress passes them, are like putting Band-Aids on a cancer. These bills fail to reach the heart of what is wrong with the prisons.

These prisons are concentration camps and modern-day slave plantations for the poor, the oppressed and the youth, who have no real future under this system.

Political prisoners and the fight to free Mumia

There are more than 3,000 political prisoners in the U.S. These heroic women and men, the majority of them from nationally oppressed communities, either entered prisons as activists during the 1960s and 1970s or became political in jail—like the murdered Black Panther leader George Jackson.

They all have at least two things in common: they stand against racist repression and other forms of injustice, and the capitalist state wants to silence them.

Many political prisoners are well known, like American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier, the MOVE 9 and the Puerto Rican independence fighters remaining in prison.

The most recognized prisoner on death row is Mumia Abu-Jamal, “the voice of the voiceless.” Mumia is more than just another innocent man, like so many who languish in apartheid-like dungeons. In the eyes of the U.S. government, he is “guilty”

of being an uncompromising, unwavering revolutionary who has helped to expose police brutality, the death penalty, and other forms of racist atrocities since he became a member of the Black Panther Party as a teenager.

Mumia's fight for a new trial has stimulated unity among progressives and revolutionaries of all nationalities and ages. The struggle to free Mumia and all political prisoners is tied to the overall struggle against a class system that persecutes the poor, workers, the oppressed, and all who resist the tiny clique of parasitic bosses and bankers.

Marxists will continue to search for an opening to struggle. They will reach out to both the existing political movement and reach out further to new layers of the masses on these issues. The opening right now with the most potential is the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

By demanding his right to a new trial, the movement can explain how Mumia got railroaded to death row in the first place. It can also generalize to explain the role of the capitalist courts. These courts railroad to prison not only revolutionaries like Mumia, but all poor people.

We can not only show how Mumia was a victim of a police frame-up and brutality, but also link his situation to millions of others who have been brutalized daily by the cops and will never receive real justice. And Mumia would be the first to say that yes, this is the right thing to do—this is just not about me but about the whole rotten, capitalist system that is quick to oppress and repress the majority of humanity to make a lousy buck.

The most powerful factor that can win a new trial for Mumia, the one capable of making the government step back from this "fast track" execution, is the organized force of millions of outraged people from every community. This is the urgent task of the progressive and revolutionary movement in the United States at this time.

In the spring of the year 2000, Mumia's case is at a critical point. To bring the story of this serious injustice before a broader public, the movement has called a meeting for Madison Square Garden in New York on May 7. This renowned meeting place, usually considered a showplace for the major spectacles of capitalist society, will for a day become the center of a struggle to free a heroic opponent of that same capitalist system.

The state—and especially the police force—wants to execute Mumia as a vehicle to strengthen their repressive apparatus and to strike a blow against the movement. To save Mumia and free him, the movement has to help create a dynamic atmosphere that will make the ruling class worry about the threat to its stability if the state tries to murder Mumia.

A victory in this case will be a strong first step toward fighting for all the oppressed against the repressive capitalist state.

Free Mumia, Leonard Peltier and all political prisoners! Fight police brutality! Tear down the prison walls! ♡

IX. Black Labor & Class Solidarity

Right:
Workers in
a tobacco
factory.
Below:
Rebellion of
kidnapped
Africans
about the
Amistad.



Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery

By Sam Marcy

From "High Tech, Low Pay," 1986

The scientific-technological revolution has affected and will continue to affect Black workers much more significantly than is commonly acknowledged by the capitalist press. Automation takes even more than its usual toll when oppressed people are concerned. It intensifies racist oppression and increases unemployment among Black people even when a capitalist economic recovery is said to be sharply on the rise, as in 1983-84.

But the impact of the scientific-technological revolution on Black people is not only a recent phenomenon. It has historical roots that go back to the beginnings of the slave trade.

The compass and the slave trade

The speed and momentum with which the scientific-technological revolution has taken off in recent years has tended to shrink into insignificance inventions which exercised a profound influence on developing social relations in the early stages of the capitalist system. Take the compass, which is regarded today as a basic direction-finding device in navigation. It is not a capitalist invention. It is said to have been discovered as early as the year 1100 in China, and may have also been discovered independently in Europe somewhat later; it was used by Arab sailors in the early 13th century.

Its development and perfection over the years became indispensable to world trade. While not invented in a period of capitalist development, the compass and other navigational instrumentation were appropriated from earlier modes of production by capitalist shipping companies at the very crest of the period of colonization, what is called the "age of discovery." It gave a tremendous impulse to world trade and commerce.

But what was the content of this trade? Why is it important in relation to our study here? Because as trade became a world phenomenon, it was essentially an international trade of slaves.

Millions upon millions of Black people were kidnapped, tortured, and brought on slave ships to the vast new continents of the Western Hemisphere. The slave trade began in the mid-15th century when Spain and Portugal began importing a significant number of Black slaves to their plantations on the Canary and Madeira islands. Most of the very same leading imperialist powers that are today concerned with maintaining the South African regime in the face of the revolutionary mass movement there earlier participated in, promoted and in fact fought ferociously to maintain the slave trade and obtain a monopoly over it.

Modern transnational monopolies differ fundamentally in their economic content from those days, but they still show the same greed and avarice, the utterly unprecedented cruelty and barbarous treatment which characterized the slave trade. This is what lay behind the flourishing of world commerce, and laid the development for what Marx later called the primitive accumulation of capital. The word primitive was not a characterization of the many millions of people captured as slaves. The term primitive was applied to the fiendish method by which the early capitalists accumulated the primary, original capital that was so indispensable for the development of their system of oppression and exploitation. Not only Spain, Portugal, England, France and Holland, but also Denmark, Sweden and Prussia participated, garnering fabulous profits as a result of the slave trade.

The compass was one of the things that made the slave trade possible, but it alone can't be held responsible for the transportation of this vast number of human beings from one continent to another thousands of miles away—away from their homeland and loved ones to a strange new country where the whip and the gun held them at bay. Scandinavian people had made a transoceanic voyage earlier, in the 12th century.

They too may have had a compass of a sort, for it is well known that the Vikings undertook long voyages and established settlements in Iceland, Greenland and even Labrador.¹ But these voyages differed fundamentally in that they were oriented toward settlements in the northern part of the world in harmony with the climatic conditions of the Scandinavian countries.

Until the development and perfection of navigational instrumentation such as the compass, the Western world was mainly confined to the Mediterranean and the coastal areas of the Atlantic so far as maritime commerce was concerned. The new era of discovery and colonization opened up the Atlantic for the first time. This could not have been done without the necessary technological improvements in navigational instrumentation as well as in the making of ships.

By 1745 the English inventor Gowin Knight had perfected a method of efficiently magnetizing needles of harder steel. He designed a compass with a single bar needle large enough for a cap resting on the pivot to be screwed into its center. He thus greatly improved the compass.² This significantly shortened the time of voyages, increased the safety of the ships and, what is of greater social and political significance, increased the volume of slavery.

As Marx was to write, "It is slavery that gave the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the precondition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance."³

The contract for supplying slaves to the Spanish colonies was called the Asiento. While British slave traders provided the necessary laborers for their own plantations, Spain contracted with the slave traders of other nations to supply its needs. The first Asiento was granted in 1518 to a Flemish company, and it specified that a certain number of tons (!) of slaves be delivered to the Spanish colonies.⁴

The Portuguese were the first traders to hold the Asiento, but the other rising capitalist powers were not to be outdone. The Dutch broke into this very lucrative form of trade around 1640 and Spain, France and Britain followed soon after.

The war for the Asiento continued until the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) when the English triumphed over their competitors. The English bourgeoisie from then on maintained control of the slave trade through the Royal African Company. This slave trade covered not only the English, French, and Dutch colonies in America and the West Indies but also the vast land of Brazil. It was in this way that such a vast portion of the African people were uprooted and thrown into the vortex of capitalist slavery.

In connection with Holland it should be noted that earlier, in the years 1636-37, the Dutch had engaged in a flourishing trade and development of tulips, for which they are still world-famous today. But that trade attained extraordinary speculative proportions so that at one period just one tulip was valued at thousands of dollars. Eventually the market broke and the Dutch bourgeoisie turned from trafficking in "a thing of matchless beauty" to the slave trade, one of the most odious, foul and certainly the most inhuman forms of commerce ever seen in history. This illustrates

with what ease and facility the capitalists can plunge from one area to another in their insatiable appetite for profits, without any regard for human values whatever. The latter are totally irrelevant in the process of capitalist production. Capital simply flows to wherever profits are highest.

The banks and the drug trade

The world slave trade has been superseded by the world drug trade. It has been widely reported that today marijuana, whose cultivation is illegal, has become the single most valuable cash crop in U.S. agriculture. This should not surprise anyone in light of the fact that some of the biggest banks have been fined millions of dollars for laundering money, that is, disguising deposits from the criminal underworld engaged in the sale of not only marijuana but heroin and cocaine. The age of telecommunications has made it possible for the banks and the criminal underworld to work as partners.

The underworld, even if not part of the establishment, can't help but integrate themselves with the banks. They want the interest on their money! Drug busts used to yield amounts in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. This then escalated into the millions. Recently some drug busts have netted loot worth more than a billion dollars! It has escalated because it is so lucrative—like the slave trade. And what is the interest on a billion dollars? At just 6 percent, it comes to \$60 million dollars. The banks have to get involved in the drug trade, because it is a lucrative source of deposits which are then loaned out at a profit.

The summits of high finance are involved. Among the banks caught red-handed have been Bank of America, the biggest in the country, and the First Boston Corporation. Bank of America was fined \$4.75 million and First Boston half a million. Chase Manhattan, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Chemical, Crocker National and Irving Trust Company have had to pay civil penalties ranging from \$210,000 to \$360,000 for reported violations.⁵ What are they hiding? The deposit of profits from the criminal underworld engaged in destructive drug trafficking which takes an especially great toll in the oppressed communities. Legality and illegality coexist under the capitalist system and always have. Even after the slave trade was outlawed, it continued despite harsh penalties, as does the drug trade.

At a time when the banks are so heavily involved in unrecoverable loans worth hundreds of billions of dollars in connection with the indebtedness of oppressed countries, how many would not resort to this most modern and technologically advanced artifice to support their credit positions?

The observations made over a century ago by a certain T.J. Dunning, and quoted by Marx in *Capital*, ring all too familiar today: "With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 percent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 percent certain will produce eagerness; 50 percent, positive audacity; 100 percent will make it ready to trample all human laws; 300 percent, and there is not a crime at which it will

scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring a profit, it will freely encourage both. Smuggling and the slave-trade have amply proved all that is here stated."⁶

The invention of the cotton gin

While the compass as a technological device in the field of navigation was appropriated by the developing bourgeoisie from an earlier mode of production dating back many hundreds of years, the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 belonged strictly to the era of capitalist development. Its invention was called forth by the development of capitalist trade and commerce. Its influence on slavery was stupendous.

A great deal has been written about Eli Whitney as the inventor of the cotton gin and as a great scientist, which he certainly was. However, according to some accounts,⁷ the first gin made in Mississippi was constructed on the basis of a crude drawing by a skilled slave. This was probably not very unusual in light of the fact that even among the first slaves brought to this country from Africa, many were skilled craftsmen. Also in both the South and the North there were skilled free Blacks. Since the slaves were never recognized in law as persons, the slave owners could appropriate their property as well as any inventions they might conceive of.

The cotton gin has often been described as the very soul of simplicity. However, it should be borne in mind that cotton has been spun, woven and dyed from the earliest times. Cotton formed the staple clothing of India, Egypt and China. Hundreds of years before the Christian era, cotton textiles were woven in India with matchless skill and their use spread to the Mediterranean countries. In the first century, traders brought fine muslin and calico to Italy and Spain. The Arabs introduced the cultivation of cotton into Spain in the 9th century. By the 17th century, the East India Company was bringing rare fabrics from India.

Before the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas, cotton was skillfully spun there and woven into fine garments and dyed tapestries. Fabrics were found in Peruvian tombs that even belonged to pre-Inca cultures. Cotton was first planted by the Europeans in Virginia's Jamestown Colony in 1607.

The so-called Cotton Belt in the U.S., where cotton has historically been the main cash crop (now marijuana is!), extends through North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, west Tennessee, east Arkansas, Louisiana, east Texas, and south Oklahoma, and also in smaller areas of southeast Missouri, southwest Kentucky, north Florida, and southeast Virginia. But prior to the invention of the cotton gin, cotton production was at a very low level. It was almost insignificant in the prevailing Southern economy. The plantation system rested mainly on tobacco and to a lesser extent on rice and indigo.

Rarely has an important technological development taken place which was as simple as the cotton gin. It separated the seeds from the cotton through a process

using a cylinder with bent spikes sharpened to form hooks. They were set in a ring and revolved through slots in a bar. The teeth pulled away the lint, which was then cleaned from the teeth by brushes. A hand crank operated the whole machine.

What did this machine accomplish? As Eli Whitney himself explained in a letter, "The machine makes the labor 50 times less without throwing any class of people out of business."⁸ Of course, the slave economy was not characterized by unemployment, unlike wage slavery.

The cotton gin tremendously increased the productivity of Black slave labor on the plantations. The figures in cotton crop production speak for themselves. In 1790, before the use of the cotton gin, the cotton crop of the U.S. amounted to 1.5 million pounds. By 1800 it had risen to 35 million pounds. By 1810 it had soared to 85 million pounds and by 1860 it reached the astonishing sum of 2 billion pounds.

The introduction of the cotton gin thus brought about a profound social revolution. A machine that could increase the productivity of labor 50 times was nothing less than sensational. It thoroughly revolutionized Southern agriculture as well as Northern production methods.

Furthermore, it was in response to the tremendous social transformation evoked by the Industrial Revolution in England, which had brought about a skyrocketing demand for cotton and a sharp price increase. As Marx explained it in broader terms, "A radical change in the mode of production in one sphere of industry involves a similar change in other spheres. This happens at first in such branches of industry as are connected together by separate phases of a process, and yet are isolated by the social division of labor, in such a way, that each of them produces an independent commodity. Thus spinning by machinery made weaving by machinery a necessity, and both together made the mechanical and chemical revolution that took place in bleaching, printing, and dyeing, imperative. So too, on the other hand, the revolution in cotton-spinning called forth the invention of the gin, for separating the seeds from the cotton fiber; it was only by means of this invention, that the production of cotton became possible on the enormous scale at present required."⁹

But how did it affect slavery itself, this "peculiar institution" as it was called at the time? Did the sensational, spectacular development in technology retard slavery or expand it?

From the time school children attend their earliest classes they are taught about the wonders of modern science and what a liberating influence it has. Did the cotton gin at the time help to weaken slavery, as the general conceptions cultivated and promoted by the bourgeoisie maintain? As we shall see, it strengthened slavery. And this happened at a time when it appeared (although it was only appearances) that slavery was in a decline.

Here it is necessary to look at the currents of thought which gave political expression to this phenomenon. For instance, the Continental Congress of 1774 proposed that the practice of importing slaves be stopped. Rhode Island and Connecticut

passed laws providing that all chattel slaves brought within their respective provinces be freed, and Delaware prohibited the importation of bondsmen in 1776. Later, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina and Maryland all forbade the importation of slaves.

The slave trade itself, of course, was finally prohibited in the U.S. more than a decade after the introduction of the cotton gin, in 1808. But it should not be forgotten that the Constitutional Convention of 1788 wrote a clause into the Constitution making it impossible as a matter of federal law to abolish the slave trade on a national basis before 1808.

The demise of the slave trade has to be viewed in the light of class interests, first of the slavocracy itself. Why would they as slaveowners be interested in abolishing it? Why, for instance, would George Mason of Virginia, himself a slave owner and supporter of slavery, condemn the slave trade as "diabolical itself and disgraceful to mankind"?¹⁰

Only by piercing the veil of capitalist hypocrisy, only by going behind the political rhetoric and seeking out the materialist interests of any given class, only by applying the materialist interpretation of history and analyzing social and political phenomena in terms of class interests, can we understand the politics, the social and political values. Thus the basic reason behind abolishing the importation of slaves even in the above-named Southern states and castigating the trade as a "disgrace to mankind" was the fact that there had been a huge influx of slaves. Like the excessive influx of any commodity governed by the law of supply and demand, this cheapened the price of a slave. The reasons behind it were economic in origin, masked in moralistic phraseology.

A surplus of slaves in some of the Southern states motivated the agitation against further importation. Most of this agitation, it should be noted, was before the use of the cotton gin really took off on a mass scale, producing unprecedented profits.

But there was also opposition to the slave trade motivated by an entirely different set of circumstances. This was a thoroughgoing revolutionary development which is highly obscured in U.S. history, particularly as it relates to the early struggles of the Black people before the Civil War. This revolutionary development fired the imagination of the enslaved Black people in this country and frightened the ruling class, both North and South.

The insurrections given the most detailed accounts in modern literature were those of Gabriel in Virginia (1800), Denmark Vesey in Charlestown, S.C. (1822), and most famous, that of Nat Turner in South Hampton County, Virginia (1831).¹¹

However, a great many insurrections took place which are only beginning to be taken note of. The Civil War itself demonstrated many instances of insurrections by the Black people. The Black masses under slavery were not the passive, docile force imagined by bourgeois historiography, especially in the literature predating the mass movement of Black people in this century.



Nat Turner organizes the rebellion.

Black rebellions go back in history to the very beginnings of slavery in this country. As early as 1687, "one year previous to the Glorious Revolution in the mother country," the revolution in England that consolidated the power of the bourgeoisie as against the old feudal aristocracy, there was "widespread revolt throughout the colonies and at a time when the Negro population of the Old Dominion was about equal to that of whites. . . . That was the attempted insurrection in Northern Neck."¹² All were executed when the plot was discovered and the revolt was crushed.

How interesting, in light of present-day developments in South Africa, that the Virginia Council placed a ban on public funerals for the dead slaves in fear that they would bring out mass demonstrations and might even provoke another rebellion!

One thing to remember in connection with the early slave insurrections is that they were influenced politically by the English Revolution and, much more profoundly, by the French Revolution. The great revolutions of this century (especially in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and Angola and now the emerging revolutionary struggle in South Africa) have also had the most profound effect among the exploited and oppressed masses everywhere.

The spectacular success of the cotton gin in raising the productivity of labor of the slaves tremendously strengthened the South, strengthened slavery and impelled the slaveholders to become not only more aggressive and bellicose but, far more important, more expansionist. Slavery drove into the Southwest and everywhere it could

in order to expand its plantations and garner in unprecedented profits. Cotton production was extensive in character, appropriating more and more land, rather than intensively applying mechanical devices. It drove the slaves harder and harder, often beyond endurance.

But the very invention which had become such a tremendous advantage to the Southern planters, like all social phenomena, soon began to develop one of the sharpest social contradictions which ultimately would undo the slavocracy altogether.

Slavery vs. capitalist production

The South was a slavocracy based on an ancient mode of production within the geographical confines of a new world social order, the bourgeois social order, with its own mode of capitalist production. One of the fundamental differences between the bourgeois mode and older modes of production so eloquently brought out in the Communist Manifesto is that "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society."¹³

How does this stack up with the Southern slavocracy? Marx continued, "Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form was . . . the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes." The South tried to retain the old slavocracy not only in unaltered form but in extreme rigidity. It was therefore on a collision course with the new bourgeois order, with the process of capitalist production and its tremendous growth in the North.

Another and more flagrant contradiction was that one of the fundamental characteristics of the capitalist mode of production is wage slavery, which means a free proletarian, that is, a worker free to sell his or her labor on the capitalist market. Capitalist production and the extraction of surplus value in the interest of further capitalist accumulation is virtually impossible without a free working class, free to be exploited and oppressed, free to be unemployed. Chattel slavery was thus thoroughly incompatible with wage slavery.

Slavery as an economic institution has everywhere proved itself uneconomical. This is especially true when it depends on one great crop such as cotton, with diminishing reliance on sugar, rice and other products. The South was turning into a monocultural economy.

Over all, the spectacular leap in technology on which the Southern planters depended so heavily to maintain slavery was only one of many scientific and technological developments in an era which was rapidly turning them out in greater and greater numbers. In this respect the South was falling far behind the North.

The North was making all the great strides in science and technology. It built up great universities which became centers for basic research. Whatever prominence the South had had in science in the earlier days, it was losing to the North. Seen in terms of the contemporary struggle in technology of the U.S. against Japan and Western

Europe, the South was steadily losing ground to the North in what we would call today the technological race.

As a competing form of economic and social system compared to the social system based on capitalist production, slavery was hopelessly out of place and had no chance, save by the use of sheer force. Slavery was static, fixed and extremely rigid in its form of production. It was also characterized by the most outlandish forms of cruelty and brutality. The capitalist system, on the other hand, while certainly not characterized by either compassion or humanity, was nevertheless "revolutionizing" its means of production, that is, it was advancing science and technology. The change from chattel slavery to wage slavery was a profoundly revolutionary change, a tremendous social transformation. But historically it constituted a change in the form of exploitation, not its abolition.



George Washington Carver,
knitting in his last years.

Thus we see that while the first phase of the scientific-technological revolution brought fabulous profits to the South and gave it the power to expand, it ultimately undid slavery. Just as technological change undermined the Southern slavocracy, so will it make obsolete the present industrial financial plutocracy with its system of wage slavery.

Black scientists and inventors

It is beyond the province of this study to give an accounting of the many scientific inventions made, particularly during the last half of this century. The modern epoch in which the bourgeois system of production has predominated has been abundant in scientists and inventors whose contributions have laid

the material foundation for present-day society.

However, there has been a systematic attempt in the U.S. to omit the very significant contributions of Black scientists. Popular science books available to the public contain the names of only a small number of Black inventors and scientists.

There are 14 Black scientists who are acknowledged to have made outstanding contributions to science, yet the Encyclopedia Britannica (1980 edition) lists only four. Conspicuously absent is Norbert Rilleux (1806-1894). He is one of three Black scientists who actually revolutionized an industry. In Rilleux's case it was sugar refining. By inventing the vacuum-pan evaporator, he transformed the sugar industry of the world.

That his name could be forgotten in a country which produces and consumes more refined sugar per capita than any other is hard to conceive of except on the basis of flagrant racist prejudice.

Until 1846, sugar cane juice was transformed into sugar by a very primitive, costly and slow process. Rilleux's invention replaced the manual operation with a mechanical one. As Louis Haber tells us in his *Black Pioneers of Science and Invention*,¹⁴ slaves had formerly transferred the sugar cane juice from one boiling kettle to another by means of long ladles. With Rilleux's device, a single worker could operate the completely enclosed machine through outside valves. It was Rilleux and George Washington Carver (1860-1943) who rescued the South from being transformed into a hopelessly backward agricultural adjunct to the North, similar to the role played by the southern part of Italy until very recently.

Carver, however, is much too well known throughout the world for his reputation to be obscured. It was Carver's work in soil improvement and the diversification of crops which made him famous. He discovered hundreds of uses for the peanut, the sweet potato and the soybean and thus stimulated the culture of these important crops. He also derived many products from cotton wastes and extracted blue, purple and red pigments from local clay.

Many industries sprang up as a result of the use of peanut products. It helped to stimulate the Southern economy to the extent that many farmers found it more profitable to engage in the production of peanuts than tobacco.

Carver also demonstrated that from the pecan, which grew well in the South, could be extracted 75 different products. When there was an overproduction of cotton, Carver showed how it could be used to make insulating board, paper, rugs, cordage and even paving blocks for highways.

Carver's achievements were perhaps best summarized by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who said upon his death: "The world of science has lost one of its most eminent figures and the race from which he sprang, an outstanding member. . . . The versatility of his genius and achievements in diverse branches of the arts and sciences were truly amazing. All mankind are the beneficiaries of his discoveries in the field of agricultural chemistry. The things which he achieved in the face of early handicaps will for all time afford an inspiring example to use everywhere."¹⁵

A third great Black scientist who transformed and revolutionized an entire industry was Jan Matzeliger (1852-1889). Although much less known than his two eminent fellow scientists, he invented what at the time seemed an impossible feat—a machine which would mass-produce shoes. Matzeliger accomplished for the shoe industry what Eli Whitney's gin did for the cotton industry of the South.

While it's true there were a number of machines in use in the shoemaking industry around the time of Matzeliger's invention, none seemed to have been able to connect the upper to the sole of the shoe. It was believed such a thing could not be done.

Matzeliger's machine did it. It could turn out a complete shoe. At first the machine

made a record run of 75 pairs of women's shoes in one day. Later Matzeliger's machine made as many as 700 pairs of shoes a day. It also reduced the cost of shoes by half and was soon being applied on a worldwide scale.

In industry there were at least four more Black scientists who made very significant contributions to the development of science and technology but are little known. One was the man who invented the automatic lubrication of machinery, Elijah McCoy (1844-1929), whose work gave rise to the expression "the real McCoy." Before his time a machine had to be stopped in order to be lubricated.

Then there was Granville T. Woods (1856-1910), who developed so many electrical inventions that he was known as the Black Edison. There was also Lewis H. Latimer (1848-1928) who advanced electric lighting and Garrett A. Morgan (1877-1963) who invented the traffic light.

In this century a number of Black scientists have made outstanding contributions in the field of health and medicine. Charles R. Drew perfected techniques to preserve blood plasma which made possible the use of blood banks. Percy L. Julian developed synthetic cortisone which, among other applications, is helpful in combating the pain of arthritis. Lloyd A. Hall found ways to sterilize foods and medical supplies. Ernest E. Just became a leading authority on cell physiology. Louis T. Wright made advances in critical antibiotic research and Daniel Hale Williams performed the first open heart surgery.

There was, however, one early Black scientist whose special importance, aside from his inventive genius, was in the field of political struggle against oppression and for equality: Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806). In most texts he is described as the surveyor who laid out the city of Washington. But he was much more than that.

Banneker was a scientist, astronomer, mathematician, clockmaker and surveyor. Earlier we alluded to Samuel Slater, the Englishman who invented a textile machine and who, when prohibited from bringing his plans for the machine to this country, memorized the blueprints and then reconstructed the machine from memory. Benjamin Banneker was able to lay out the city of Washington after memorizing much more detailed plans to which he had had only limited access as an assistant.

Originally a young Frenchman had been given the job of planning and laying out the capital. Banneker was one of his three assistants. The young Frenchman got into a dispute with Thomas Jefferson and as a result took his plans and left for France, leaving Jefferson in the lurch. Banneker stepped forward and volunteered to do the job on the basis of what he retained in his memory. That's how the city was finally laid out.

Banneker made the first clock ever built in the United States. He built it entirely of wood and carved each gear by hand. The clock kept perfect time and people from all over the country came to see it. Banneker should also be remembered for the almanac he prepared in 1792 and each year thereafter for ten years.

What is politically significant in Banneker's history is that he was the only contemporary of Thomas Jefferson to challenge him on the issue of equality. Every school child is taught that Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence which

contained this famous sentence: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

But Jefferson was also a wealthy slave owner, and even though he sold off all his slaves toward the end of his life his concept of equality did not extend to Black people. He had also written that "the Blacks are inferior to the whites in the endowment both of body and mind." This was no chance statement. The collection of Jefferson's works demonstrates that these sentiments appeared widely in his writings.

Even though the 18th century became known in history as the Enlightenment, especially the years following the revolutions in the U.S. and France, Jefferson held to his reactionary, racist view of Black people. None of the outstanding leaders at the time directly took Jefferson to task for the flagrant contradiction between the florid language he used in the Declaration of Independence and the ugly practice of slavery, which in fact was validated in the Constitution.

It remained for Banneker to use his almanac for this purpose. He attached to it an eleven-page handwritten letter that systematically took apart Jefferson's lofty proclamation of inalienable rights while at the same time condoning the vicious practice of slavery. This was one of the few, perhaps the only, direct attacks on Jefferson, the man who to this day along with Andrew Jackson is honored by the Democratic capitalist politicians at their annual Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners as a symbol of democracy and freedom.

Banneker's letter to Jefferson did oblige the latter to back off somewhat. In a letter dated August 30, 1791, Jefferson thanked Banneker: "I can add with truth that nobody wishes more ardently to see a good system commence for raising the condition both of their [Black people's—S.M.] body and mind to what it ought to be. . . . I do see such proofs that you exhibit that nature has given to our Black brethren, talents equal to those of the other colors of men and that the appearance of the want of them is owing merely to degraded condition of their existence both in Africa and in America."

Jefferson said he was taking the liberty of sending Banneker's almanac to the French Academy of Sciences because he considered it a document "to which your whole color has a right for their justification against the doubts which have been entertained of them." It is only because of Banneker's struggle for equality and against oppression that Jefferson, who held such an eminent position in U.S. history as a liberal, was forced to retreat somewhat from his racist views.

By way of acknowledgment, it should be said that Louis Haber in his book "Black Pioneers in Science and Invention" has done as much to popularize what was so little known about the achievements of Black scientists, as Paul D. DeKruif did for biologists more than a half-century ago in his lucid exposition, *Microbe Hunters*.

The individual scientist in the modern era of the scientific-technological revolution faces a vastly different world than the one in which Banneker or even Thomas Edison at a later date lived and worked. The role of the individual scientist has been diminished by the emergence of capitalist collectivism in the big business laboratory. Today's

vast laboratory complexes are organized and controlled by the mighty corporate giants and employ thousands of scientists. The giant corporations compel all scientific personnel to sign contracts that any inventions they may develop in the course of their work are the property of the company.

Superimposed on them is a labyrinth of laboratories directly controlled by the Pentagon. The great universities of today are intimate collaborators of the Pentagon and few have real independence as to how to allocate their scientific investigations.

One of the truly important scientific inventions of modern times was the transistor. True to the age in which we live, it was developed in the laboratories of Bell Telephone Company in 1948 by American physicists John Bardeen and Walter H. Brattain. How many hundreds of scientific workers helped lay the basis for it is not really taken into account.

When mass layoffs take place, such as we've described with AT&T, what happens to the laid-off scientific personnel? How does it affect the pursuit of their scientific career? In that highly significant layoff, no breakdown was given as to how it affected Black scientific workers, women or other oppressed people. There's not a word as to whether affirmative action has been a factor in the employment of Black, Latin, Asian, Native, Arab and women workers, or whether the layoffs took place in accordance with affirmative action guidelines.

The Third World brain drain

The scientific-technological revolution has had a deleterious effect on Third World scientific personnel and the development of science and inventions. Immediately after the Second World War the U.S. embarked on a vast campaign to pirate both the technology and the scientific personnel of the other imperialist countries. It also started to drain the budding development of science and technology in the oppressed countries.

With respect to the imperialist countries, it is well known how right after the war the U.S. brought captured German scientific personnel here to work on rockets and space flight. But it wasn't only from Germany. The British government under Labor Prime Minister Harold Wilson finally restricted what was later called the brain drain by an agreement that limited U.S. pirating of scientists, at least from that area.

While U.S. government policy has been to restrict immigration and imprison and deport so-called illegal, undocumented workers, it has at the same time enticed Third World scientists to the U.S. On the one hand, imperialist policy through a variety of foundations like those endowed by the Fords, Rockefellers and others seems to be constantly exhorting the oppressed countries to modernize, to become innovative and inventive and thereby aid their industrial and technological development. But the truth is that every chance they get to entice Third World scientists to the U.S., they do so, in complete contradiction to the proclaimed policy. They not only extend the stay of visiting students and professors and encourage them to become citizens but also offer them various monetary inducements.

It is one thing to defend the democratic right of individuals to choose their own domicile. It is another matter if this is part and parcel of a policy of monopoly capitalism to pillage and plunder the resources of Third World countries.

The scientific personnel of less developed countries are in many respects their most precious resource. The brain-drain aspect of the scientific-technological revolution has enhanced, not diminished, U.S. imperialism's intense exploitation of the oppressed people.

Black labor today

Extrapolating from the population figures provided in the 1986 annual report of the National Urban League on the "State of Black America," there are about 28 million Black people in the United States. That's larger than most African countries and larger than most middle-sized countries represented in the United Nations.

By always referring to Black people as a minority, the bourgeois press obscures the class significance of the Black population, which is overwhelmingly working class and which therefore, especially when taken together with the Latin, Asian and Native population, adds a very significant dimension to the whole character of the working class here.

To regard the Black struggle strictly from the viewpoint of minority-majority is to lose much of its profound social and political implications. What should interest working-class students of the Black struggle, however, is that even these figures, which are probably understated, disclose a social viability which has strong revolutionary potentialities given the conditions we believe are developing that will give a fundamentally altered social composition to the working class.

To understand the current state of Black labor in the United States, it is necessary to look first at the mass migration of Black people to the North which took on momentum early in the 20th century and reached considerable proportions at the end of the First World War. Mass production industries in the U.S. like auto (especially Ford) and steel were in a period of high capitalist development. When this culminated in the First World War it opened the gates of some industries and fields of economic endeavor to Black labor, notwithstanding rank discrimination and entrenched racial barriers.

These were not relaxed. Instead artificial classifications were created so that Black workers doing almost exactly the same work as whites got far lower wages. Nor were barriers lifted in the skilled trades and AFL craft unions. These were as rigidly racist in their approach as they had been before the First World War. But Black labor continually found ways to gain skills and get skilled jobs despite government, employer and union racial discrimination.

It should always be borne in mind that even the first boatloads of slaves who arrived in this country from Africa brought with them useful skills which were developed even in slave times. In cities like New York and Philadelphia, before the mass migrations from Europe started, there were a considerable number of Black workers in

industry who had developed skills. But as more and more white labor from Europe became available, Black workers began to be relentlessly driven out of industry.

These mass migrations from Europe undermined whatever leverage the Black workers might have had in industry notwithstanding discrimination. Things got more and more difficult for them.

Capitalism as the involuntary promoter of the development of the working class also caused the mass migration of Black agricultural workers from the South to the North. Notwithstanding the racial barrier or the unemployment as a consequence of the capitalist economic cycle, more and more Black workers got into Northern industry even as the pool of Black unemployed grew.

That most of the central cities of the North and now some in the South have a majority or a very large minority of Black people is objectively due to the transformation of capitalist industry with the First and Second World Wars. World War II in particular was a much longer war for the U.S. and entailed the construction of many defense facilities. In fact, the entire U.S. industrial apparatus was converted for war purposes and for the first time full employment became an artificial phenomenon dependent on war spending.

These two objective factors—the First and Second World Wars—also found an echo beginning in 1950 with the Korean War. In the early 1950s and again during the Vietnam War employment was artificially propped up by the continuing growth of the defense industries.

If today in cities like Detroit, Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, New York, Atlanta, Memphis and Birmingham there are large Black populations with some political power, it is not due to any attempt by the ruling class to ameliorate the condition of Black workers or to lighten the burden of discrimination. Rather it comes as a result of objective development arising out of the organic functioning of the capitalist system and the inevitability of imperialist wars and military interventions abroad. This is not to say that the whole industrial structure of the U.S. is due entirely to imperialist wars, but without them it is difficult to conceive how there could have been such a rapid social transformation in the condition of Black and also white workers.

The mass migration from the South—and back to the South, especially during times of unemployment—is among the objective factors affecting the development of Black labor. The subjective factors arise from the freedom struggle, especially the struggle of the 1960s.

The Black freedom struggle

It is utterly impossible to understand the contemporary role of Black workers in this country and particularly their situation in the trade union movement without considering them in a broader political framework. A study of Black labor, especially over the last 25 years, that omitted the general political struggle, the freedom struggle of the Black people as a whole, would make for a very constricted and even distorted

view of both the great achievements of Black workers in the trade union movement and the equally great if not greater drawbacks of their situation.

Racism has permeated every layer of capitalist society; the trade union movement from its earliest times up to the present has been permeated with chauvinism and vicious discriminatory practices. The trade unions are the most formidable working class organizations in the country. Aside from temporary retreats and taking into account the long duration of the political reaction, they are bound to become organs of the great struggles for emancipation from both racist oppression and capitalist class exploitation.

But all of this has to be considered in the broader arena of the overall political struggle of Black people, in which the trade unions have certainly been a significant part, but only a part. In reality, what happens there is a reflection of what is going on in the Black struggle as a whole. The great battles of the 1960s and 1970s in particular must be considered in evaluating and analyzing how this reflected itself in the unions.

Just to take one example out of many: In April 1969, some 500 Black workers shut down production at the Ford plant in Mahwah, N.J., for several days. The workers walked out because a foreman called one of the workers a "Black bastard." Although the official UAW leadership urged the workers to return to their jobs, they nevertheless stayed out until the foreman was ousted from the plant. This was the famous so-called wildcat strike at Mahwah organized by the United Black Brothers, and it represented a significant victory for all the workers.

If this significant victory for the UAW at that period is seen only in the trade union framework, it could present an oddity. But when seen in the larger framework of the overall Black political struggle, one gets a far truer measure of its significance for the local struggle as well as nationally.

There were other significant developments in the UAW that came on the heels of the great 1967 rebellion in Detroit and ushered in a series of electoral victories for the Black workers in the UAW. "Suddenly the UAW leadership stopped the practice of mobilizing opposition to Black candidates in local elections. Within a few months after the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Black workers were elected as presidents of Local 900 (Ford's Wayne plant), Local 47 (Chrysler Detroit Forge), Local 961 (Chrysler's Eldron Gear), Local 7 (Chrysler), Local 51 (Plymouth), and even Local 1248 (Chrysler Mopar), where only 20% of



Black Labor and Class Solidarity 171

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the plant's 989 workers were Black. A Black was elected for the first time as vice-president of Briggs Local 21. ..."¹⁶

Before the Mahwah struggle took place, there were a considerable number of political rebellions and insurrections of Black people. There was the Harlem rebellion, followed by Watts, Newark, and Cleveland, to name only a few, and of course the largest of the mass insurrections took place in Detroit. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 there were a total of more than 500 rebellions throughout the whole country.

How then can the struggles of Black workers for equality be seen as strictly trade union struggles? Few if any of the very significant gains made by Black workers could have been attained without the so-called outside struggle, that is, the general political struggle put up by Black people. That was the real catalyst, the basic generator for the trade union gains, many of which were not only vital but indispensable, considering the long and difficult task to attain equality which still goes on.

What is said about the Black struggle applies equally and to some extent even more to the Latin struggle, the women's struggle and the gay and lesbian struggle. Any gains made in the unions must be related to the broader struggles which generated them. It would of course be fruitful to speculate on how different it could have been had the struggles been initiated by the trade union movement rather than being forced upon it. But this is the music of the future, not of the past.

There are about 110 million workers in the U.S. today. In the mid-1980s, only about 17.3 million belonged to unions, as we've discussed earlier. However, there can be no doubt that the union movement will become the fundamental lever for working class struggle. The anti-labor offensive which has been sweeping the country for several years is bound to produce one of the truly great upsurges of the working class, and this time the union movement will not be in the rearguard but in the vanguard of the struggle as regards Black, Latino, Asian, and Native people, women and lesbians and gay men.

The tardiness of the working class response to the offensive of the ruling class in the face of such profound political and social reaction can be explained in part by the lack of a mass political party of the working class. The response from the working class, both organized and unorganized, is likely to come as the result of spontaneous outbreaks which will take the form of trade unionism but not necessarily in the way the trade union officialdom presides over the union movement. What more concrete form it will take we have to leave for events themselves to reveal.

Suffice it to say that the very intensity of the political reaction, generated by the Reagan administration and prepared earlier by the Carter administration and its predecessors, has created the conditions for a tumultuous social upheaval, not a controlled one that could be easily manipulated by contemporary bourgeois politicians and the trade union bureaucracy. The very tardiness in preparing a party of the working class, which in Europe and other areas has taken generations to build up, makes inevitable

that the pent-up rage at the oppression and exploitation endured by all strata of the working class will break out in another form. It would seem to emanate most easily from the workplace and from the vast pool of unemployed. The special oppression of women, Black, Latin, Asian, Arab and Native workers will make them a magnet for one another.

A former science adviser to Reagan in late 1985 told a Cable News Network (CNN) interviewer that "unemployment in Western Europe constitutes the greatest danger to Western civilization." Of course, it's true! But not only in Europe. The capitalist "recovery" here in the U.S. has been taking place amidst some 15 million unemployed, if comprehensive calculations are made. Social peace cannot be maintained on such an explosive material base.

The impact of high tech on Black postal workers

In attempting to evaluate the impact of the scientific-technological revolution on Black workers as well as other oppressed people, it is best to avoid focusing our analysis on a narrow sector of industry. Also, while the influence of high tech has been most profound in industries such as auto, electric and steel, we have already dealt with these areas in some measure.

We are also deliberately avoiding areas where racist or sexist discrimination is most pronounced, or where Black, Latin and women workers still constitute only a very small portion of the workforce. A broad sector of the economy, where there are a significant number of Black, Latin and women workers, is more appropriate for this study.

By taking a sector of the economy where so-called optimum conditions prevail, where racist and sexist oppression is generally regarded as less significant than in other areas, we are better able to illustrate our theme, namely, that high tech results in low-wage jobs and unemployment in all sectors of the economy. This explains why we have chosen what seems like an unlikely area, the U.S. Postal Service, for this study. Furthermore it is probably the oldest service industry in the country, being created around the time of the U.S. Constitution in 1789.

Though racism may be a less significant factor in the Postal Service than in some other areas, nevertheless this is the current situation for Black postal workers:

"Blacks appear to be concentrated in less future-oriented Postal Service jobs. When racial concentration versus dispersal of employees in the Postal Service is analyzed, Blacks appear to be concentrated in the lower range and low-paying jobs (levels 1-6). In contrast, in grade levels 7 to 38, 90% of the postal employees are non-minority. Thus the mode of substitution in this case is by a targeted racial distribution in which Blacks are concentrated in the jobs most likely to be affected by technology, particularly the nine-digit zip code, automated mail processing and flat sorting technology and the electronic message systems." The same is true for Latin and other oppressed people.

During the depths of the Great Depression, work at the post office was considered the best and most secure job for anybody from a working class family. Even today,

assuming there are openings, it probably offers more job security for a young person from a working class family than other areas. However, a great transformation is underway here too, although it is not publicly recognized.

In 1970, during the Nixon administration, Congress enacted the Postal Reorganization Act (PRA). With this new law the government took decisive steps that were to have far-reaching significance for many millions of workers. For the postal workers it began a chain of developments concerning the dispatching, processing and delivery of mail which ultimately resulted in a loss of almost 100,000 jobs as of 1983.

The PRA was the first early warning of what has become a virtual daily phenomenon, the so-called deregulation of industry, whose principal aim and function, despite claims of modernization by the ruling class, is to ditch restraining and protective labor legislation and to get into private hands anything they feel can be profitable.

The PRA made a so-called independent agency of the Postal Service, which had been regarded as a full-fledged arm of the government with representation in the Cabinet since way back in 1828. The act reduced the status of the post office and turned it into an agency of the executive branch with an eleven-person board of governors, nine of them appointed by the president with the approval of the Senate, and a postmaster general who is responsible to the president.

The whole idea was to gradually shrink the vast and complex network of postal services, introduce a series of technological innovations and put it on a so-called business basis. The income and outgo of funds were to be equalized and eventually a net surplus was to be produced in the same way as in private industry.

What has really happened since the PRA went into effect?

Despite the decline in the number of postal workers from 756,000 in 1970 to 660,000 in 1983, the Postal Service has increased its piece volume by more than 20 billion. In 1981 alone, mail volume reached a record 110 billion pieces.

Despite this growth in productivity, however, in the last contract, announced on December 24, 1984, the government through an arbitration panel imposed a notorious two-tier wage pattern on the American Postal Workers Union and the National Association of Letter Carriers. This meant a 25-percent wage cut for workers hired after a certain date. In time this lower wage may apply to all workers unless a combined effort of all the unions, not only the postal unions, is mobilized against it throughout the country. (The two-tier system of wage levels first got a foothold in none other than the Boeing company, one of the pillars of high technology in the aerospace industry.)

At the same time, notwithstanding the government's bold talk about private enterprise standing on its own feet, it has continued a long line of luscious contracts to the big corporations which supply the materials to the Postal Service. In addition, the government is trying to weaken the "no-layoff clause" in the postal workers' contract.

The unions have a real job on their hands whenever they have to face the government in high-tech negotiations, particularly with the restriction on their right to

strike and after what the Reagan administration did with its vicious union busting against the air traffic controllers (PATCO).

The new relationship of the government, particularly Congress, to the postal workers can be seen in the drastic decline in postal appropriations and share of operating expenses over the fiscal years 1971-83. A reactionary Congress and a reactionary White House have combined through the Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan years to steadily cut down the amount of appropriations for the post office and let the broad public carry the weight of financing postal operations.

Of course, in those years all other vital services by federal and state governments were also cut down. But what is necessary to distinguish here is that the entire strategy has been geared toward investment in the mechanization of the dispatching, processing and delivery of postal services. A significant portion of the appropriations has been devoted to the automation of mail processing—the installation of optical character readers and bar code sorters in major post offices. All this is bound to squeeze out more workers.

The aim of this automation is to save nearly a billion dollars a year in labor costs—which means that the jobs of many more workers, especially Black, Latin and women workers, are at peril. An official history published by the Postal Service itself says that “After the introduction of ZIP+4 in 1983, the first delivery phase of the new OCR (optical character readers) channel sorters and BCS (bar code sorters) was completed by mid-1984. When fully implemented and used with the expanded ZIP+4 codes, the automated system will save an estimated \$960 million annually in labor costs alone.”¹⁸

What happened to the electronic mail delivery service is instructive for seeing how the big corporations allow new technologies to be developed at government expense only to take them over themselves. The U.S. government first developed electronic computer-originated mail (E-COM), which went into service in 1982. It allowed large-volume mailers to transmit messages via computer to selected post offices, where they were printed out, placed in envelopes and delivered by letter carriers. But then a group of large private multinational companies including UPS, Federal Express and Western Union instigated the anti-trust division of the Justice Department to file a suit charging the Postal Service with unfair competition because of the low rates charged. Although the post office won, the so-called independent Postal Rate Commission then demanded that the E-COM rates be doubled, which finally forced the government to abandon that part of the delivery of electronic mail which pertains to domestic use. However, the government continues to maintain the service called Intelpost, which is an electronically transmitted international service.

The struggle by the big carriers to dismantle the Postal Service was foreshadowed by a big business-inspired article in the June 1979 *Forbes* magazine entitled, “Do we really need the postal service?”

Here it is necessary to demonstrate the close link that now exists between the Postal Service and the entire telecommunications industry. Real competition from any num-

ber of services in private industry operates as a goad to the Postal Service management to follow suit with each and every new mechanical innovation showing promise of reducing costs and hence the unit cost of labor. Essentially that is what really lies behind all cost-reducing programs.

In the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the PRA was passed, carried out one of its devastating assaults on the mass of telephone operators, which took a huge toll on Black, Latin and women workers especially.

What happened at AT&T has exceptional relevance to the situation of the postal workers. Even at that time it had become clear that the telecommunications industry had tremendous influence in the government, and that the enactment of the PRA would begin active competition between private industry and the postal service, in the process liquidating many thousands upon thousands of jobs.

However, the postal workers saw the Postal Reorganization Act in an entirely different context. They had just gone through their first and most important strike, which despite some concessions had won legitimacy for their union. This was accomplished even though Nixon sent the U.S. Army into the post offices of the great metropolitan areas of the country in an effort to intimidate and break the workers' resistance. That the postal workers were able to survive this and grow in strength explains why they won subsequent gains and concessions from the government.

In all this, the historical background of the Postal Service should not be forgotten. Like other institutions of U.S. capitalism, it has been profoundly segregationist since the beginning. It was not until 1865, the last year of the Civil War, that the laws prohibiting (yes, prohibiting!) Black people from carrying mailbags from stagecoach to post office were abolished.

Racism has continued during the many decades thereafter, partly as a result of outright discrimination by white-organized unions. The founding of the National Alliance of Postal Workers in 1913 marked a milestone in self-help organizational mediums by Black workers when the leadership of white-organized unions would not open their doors to Black workers.

It was not until the 1940s that Black, Latin and women workers were more freely admitted to the unions under the impact of many profound social changes, most important of which was the civil rights struggle and the upsurge of the labor movement as a whole. This finally made it possible for Black, Latin and women workers to take advantage of employment opportunities in the Postal Service.

Even now, despite attrition and pending future layoffs, "minorities [since 1978] have steadily increased as a proportion of total Postal Service employment." Thus in the fiscal year 1981, a year of big layoffs as a result of the capitalist recession all over industry, "the Postal Service hired 10,064 Blacks, 2,765 Hispanics and 2,289 other minorities for a total of 15,118 or 27.6% of new employees."

Of course, with anticipated future employment reductions, the picture is not encouraging, particularly if one takes into account the direction the government is tak-

ing in pushing the replacement of workers with sophisticated technology. It is more and more geared to the telecommunications industry, of which the government is the principal supporter and promoter.

However, the future of women is a different matter. Female postal employment is predicted to rise while the proportion of Black workers as a whole is expected to remain constant.

The dispatch and delivery of mail are a component of the transportation and communications industry. Like railroad workers, truck drivers and waterfront workers, postal workers participate in the freight-handling process. Transportation facilitates the circulation of capitalist commodities and the scientific-technological revolution has accelerated this process. What automation has done in the Postal Service is another form of what containerization did in the shipping and maritime industries. The postal workers must view themselves as part of the communications, telecommunications and transportation industries with whom they have so much in common.

The employers and the capitalist state have a sustained and abiding interest in artificially keeping the workers in these industries apart and separated. They do this all the more to divide Black and white. However, the scientific-technological revolution has forged a new link between a variety of industries which hitherto seemed to be very separated. It has opened up a new vista, a new horizon which lays out and broadens the basis for working class solidarity.

The capitalist system in its early stages needed a government postal service in order to develop capitalist industry and communications as a whole. It could not have developed the productive forces without almost two centuries of a government-sponsored postal service. Now, with the development of telecommunications, the government wants to ditch that part of the service which is no longer lucrative for big business and high finance, and retain that portion which still facilitates big business, while holding a club over the heads of the postal workers through compulsory no-strike mediation and arbitration.

Union leaders must make particularly clear that there is absolutely no valid reason why the capitalist government should be able to dictate the wages and working conditions of the postal workers and at the same time deprive the workers of their right to strike. The Postal Service is but one segment of the telecommunications industry, as are RCA, GE or AT&T. It is really one connected industry and the demand should be made to remove the anti-strike clause against the postal workers. ♣

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**Under Reconstruction,
Black children gained
the right to attend
public school.**

Detroit's revolutionary history

How ex-students linked up with Black workers

By Debbie Johnson & Jerry Goldberg

Workers World, June 28, 2001

From a talk at a Workers World Party meeting in Detroit on the 30th anniversary of the party there. It examines the revolutionary heritage of the working-class struggle in that city, which of course is ignored in the official tri-centennial celebrations.



In 1970, the student movement, especially in opposition to the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam, was at its peak. In May of that year, when the U.S. invaded Cambodia, strikes and demonstrations shut down universities nationwide.

Students at the University of Michigan were in the forefront of that movement. The leading group was Students for a Democratic Society.

While SDS had originally begun as a left-liberal organization, based on participatory democracy, it had been transformed into a revolutionary formation with diverse ideological currents by the late 1960s.

The Ann Arbor SDS chapter was one of the strongest in the country, with units in every dorm on campus. In 1969 and 1970 it led many thousands of students in shutting down military recruiting, opposing the conspiracy trial of the Chicago 8, defending the Black Panthers and Brown Berets, and lending active support to Black students on strike for affirmative action.

It was a period of intense struggle. The SDS members were constantly studying Marxism and debating revolutionary ideology. By the spring of 1970, a consensus had developed among the leadership that to be a serious revolutionary you had to leave the campus and move to cities where the working class, the only class that could overthrow capitalism, was concentrated.

In the spring of 1970, a group of 35 activists left Ann Arbor and moved to Detroit to become revolutionary working-class organizers. This group was not ideologically cohesive. It ended up dividing into various political currents.

While in SDS, a number of the student leaders had gotten to know Workers World Party. Among the established left parties, this party and its youth arm, Youth Against War and Fascism, were unique in their willingness and ability to link up with the most militant sectors of the student movement. They were respected for their organization and discipline in the many street battles taking place.

The cutting-edge question in that period, as today, was the defense of the right of oppressed nations to self-determination, especially the internal colonies of U.S. imperialism—the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Native nations. No group defended the Black Panthers, the Young Lords and the other revolutionary formations of the

oppressed nations with more vigor and determination than Workers World Party.

As a result, shortly after moving to Detroit, a group that had formerly been the leadership of Ann Arbor SDS affiliated with Workers World Party.

When the comrades came into Detroit in the spring of 1970, the city was a center of revolutionary activity, especially in the Black community. Detroit had experienced one of the largest Black rebellions of the late 1960s, triggered by police brutality. The Black community fought the cops and National Guard for six days and nights in 1967, suffering 43 deaths.

National liberation and class struggle

In the late 1960s the auto industry was booming in Detroit. Unlike today, many of the plants, particularly Chrysler plants, were located right in the city where the workforce was predominantly African American. Young Black workers just out of high school could get jobs in the plants. The benefits and wages were pretty decent, as long as you were willing to put up with miserable working conditions.

Detroit was unique in the Black struggle because of the dominant position and concentration of African American workers in the auto plants. Here the struggle for national liberation tended to merge with the working-class struggle.

In the rest of the country, because of high unemployment and generally oppressive conditions in the Black community, the Black Panthers reached out to the lumpen-proletariat, the most oppressed and unemployed sectors of the community, as the base for building their organization. However, as Huey Newton explained, the Panthers studied Marxist ideology and understood the historic role of the working class in overthrowing capitalism.

Detroit's auto industry was then the largest industry in the country, as it continues to be today on a lesser scale. Because of the concentration of Black workers, particularly in the inner-city Chrysler plants, revolutionary leaders in the Black community saw a unique opportunity to directly merge their liberation struggle with the working-class struggle to overthrow capitalism.

The formation that reflected this ideological view, and was unique to Detroit, was the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

The base of this political party was among Black workers organized into caucuses in most of the Chrysler plants. In Dodge Main, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement was extremely strong and led many job actions. Another powerful group was the Eldon Avenue Revolutionary Union Movement at the Eldon Avenue axle plant.

The league also recruited the revolutionary intelligentsia in the Black community. Among its leaders were attorney Ken Cockrel and John Watson, who while a student at Wayne State University became editor of the South End newspaper, turning it into an organ of the league. The masthead of the South End read: "One class-conscious worker is worth 1,000 students."

The league struggled to free James Johnson, a Black worker who, fed up with racism at the Eldon Avenue plant, shot a couple of supervisors and a labor relations representative. The league's newspaper ran a famous poem about him that concluded, "Whenever Black workers are under attack, there will be thousands of Johnsons back to back. James Johnson needed a Thompson." Because of the legal and political struggle on his behalf, Johnson was found not guilty by reason of temporary insanity and even won workers' compensation benefits.

Even after the League of Revolutionary Black Workers began declining organizationally in the 1970s, the link between the Black liberation and working-class struggle continued. In the summer of 1972, two Black workers took over the power plant and shut down the Jefferson Assembly Plant in Detroit to demand the firing of a racist foreman.

Some 5,000 workers surrounded the power plant to defend them. They won. This was followed by other wildcat, or unsanctioned, strikes.

The movement began impacting white workers, who recognized the Black workers in the union as the militant force.

In 1971, at the Michigan Truck Plant in Wayne, Mich., where only about 15 percent of the workers were African American and the union leadership had been virtually all white and very racist, Jerry Goldberg of Workers World Party and another radical worker were instrumental in forming a multinational rank-and-file caucus and newsletter. The caucus got a shop committee elected of five African Americans and two whites.

Even though there was still plenty of racism among the white workers, they knew they were exploited every day on the assembly line and needed representatives who would fight for them. They saw the strength and militancy of the Black workers in Detroit who were constantly battling the bosses. And they wanted some of that fight in their plant as well.

This was a sign of the dynamic developing in Detroit at that time. Revolutionary Black leadership in the auto plants was becoming a pole of attraction to white workers looking to fight their oppressive conditions as well. ♣

Black coal miners

A long legacy of struggle

By Stephen Millies

Workers World, Jan. 29, 2006

African Americans have been mining coal and fighting bosses for over 200 years. Slaves were working in coal mines around Richmond, Va., as early as 1760. During the Civil War, a thousand slaves dug coal for 22 companies in the "Richmond Basin."

Black miners were expected to load four or five tons of coal. Slaves able to fill this quota were fed supper. Those who couldn't were whipped.

Slavery in the mines didn't end after the war in 1865. For decades prisoners convicted of "vagrancy" and "loitering" worked as virtual slaves for private outfits in Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee. From 1880 to 1904, 10 percent of Alabama's state budget was paid by leasing prisoners to coal companies.

African Americans accounted from 83 percent to 90 percent of these slave miners in Alabama. Sixty-nine percent of Tennessee prisoners digging coal in 1891 were Black. Some poor whites were railroaded to jail too.

Conditions were horrendous in these convict mines. Nearly one out of ten prisoners died annually at the Tracy City, Tenn. mine operated by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company (TCI).

TCI was bought by United States Steel in 1907. USS continued to operate TCI's mines in Alabama for another 20 years. Reparations are owed by USS and the JPMorgan Chase Bank whose financial ancestor set up this steel Goliath as the first billion-dollar corporation in 1900.

Three hundred miners with guns freed prisoners at TCI's Briceville, Tenn., facility on July 15, 1891. The following week 1,500 miners returned to free more prisoners. H.H. Schwartz of the Chattanooga Federation of Trades reported that "whites and Negroes are standing shoulder to shoulder" and armed with 840 rifles.

James Knox, an African American convicted of passing a \$30 bad check, was tortured to death by guards at Alabama's Flat Top mine on Aug. 14, 1924, because he was unable to meet the mine's daily ten-ton quota.



A 90-year-old ex-slave miner, West Virginia, 1921.



Miner lighting a fuse, 1923.

The uproar over this murder finally forced Alabama to shut down its slave mines. On July 1, 1928, 499 Black prisoners singing the “Negro” spiritual, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” turned in their lamps and picks for the last time.

Black labor summoned to the mines

By 1930 there were over 55,000 Black coal miners. That year African Americans accounted for 53 percent of Alabama’s coal diggers.

These Alabama miners went on strike in 1894, 1904 and 1908. Eleven thousand miners—75 percent of whom were Black—struck again from Sept. 7, 1920, to March 12, 1921. Among the Black leaders were J. F. Sorsby, United Mine Workers District 20 vice-president, and International organizers William Prentice and George H. Edmunds.

Despite bold tactics that included dynamiting a Southern Railroad train carrying scab coal, the strike was crushed by the National Guard. At least 16 people were killed. But the UMW came back to organize these mines in the 1930s during the Great Depression when militant struggles were being carried out by labor.

Twenty-two thousand African Americans were employed in West Virginia’s mines in 1930. Black and white miners there fought side-by-side in the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek strike of 1913-14. The Black union man known as “Few Clothes” Dan Chain—portrayed by James Earl Jones in the powerful John Sayles film, “Matewan”—became legendary for his courage.

The “mine wars” in Mingo and Logan counties from 1919 to 1921 produced the biggest armed confrontation in U.S. labor history. Logan County Sheriff Don Chaffin was paid \$32,700 a year (worth about \$400,000 today) by mine owners to keep out union organizers.

Following the assassination of the pro-union Sheriff Sid Hatfield on Aug. 1, 1921, 8,000 armed miners, one quarter of whom were Black, marched on Logan County. While ten union members were killed at Blair Mountain, 100 of Chaffin’s mercenaries were slain.

Army Gen. Billy Mitchell wanted to bomb the miners. Only the dispatch of 2,500 soldiers by President Warren G. Harding prevented the union’s victory.

The mechanization of mines has wiped out 400,000 union jobs since 1950. Black workers were targeted first for dismissal. Just a few thousand African Americans are working in mines today.

The 14 miners killed last month in West Virginia were white. Most of the people who drowned in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were Black. Capitalist greed and the Bush administration are responsible for all of their deaths.

Sources: Black Coal Miners in America by Ronald L. Lewis (The University Press of Kentucky, 1987) and Coal, Class and Color, Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-1932 by Joe William Trotter, Jr. (University of Illinois Press, 1990). ♣



Miners’ children, 1932.

Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights



By Imani Henry

Workers World, June 1, 2006

At 6 a.m. on May 23, more than 80 New York City domestic workers and their supporters boarded buses and set out to Albany, the state capital, for the first Domestic Worker Advocacy Day.

Organized by Domestic Workers United, the vast majority of these activists are immigrant women of color—Caribbean, Asian, South Asian and Latina.

DWU estimates that over 200,000 people work as nannies, housekeepers, elder companions, cleaners, babysitters, cooks and baby nurses inside private households in New York City.

The trip's main objective was to fight for a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights. This is the first statewide legislative proposal drafted by and for domestic workers. It lays out a comprehensive set of protections and rights based on the unique conditions workers in private homes face.

More important, Domestic Workers United and their allies are fighting to tear up, once and for all, the roots of the racist and sexist exploitation of unpaid labor for both domestic and farm work wielded against people of color in the United States since the days of slavery.

"We know that the first domestic workers of color in this country were African American," says Linda Abad, founder of Damayan Migrant Workers Association, which fights for the rights of Filipino/a domestic workers. "In the 1970s, women from the Third World began to fill those jobs. We know we aren't just fighting for the rights of immigrant women now, but against the legacy of slavery, colonization and U.S. imperialism that forced us to migrate here, and centuries of profit that has been made."

Workplace conditions of domestic workers in NYC

According to a 1999 study by the Urban Institute, the average working-class family pays \$9,000 a year for child-care or day-care facilities that sometimes have several dozen children in their care. Families with less income generally seek out what is left of city-funded day-care facilities.

Only 4 percent of New York City children, generally from two-parent households, have nannies.

A study compiled by Domestic Workers United and Data Center, "Home is Where the Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry," was released May 19. It

is based on surveying 574 domestic workers and conducting interviews with both workers and employers.

According to this study, 93 percent of domestic workers in New York are women, 99 percent are immigrants, and 76 percent do not have U.S. citizenship.

Debunking a very popular myth in the media, only a small percentage of domestic workers are white. The overwhelming majority of the workers—95 percent—are people of color.

Fifty-nine percent of New York's domestic workers are the primary income earners for their own families. Like other workers, domestic workers see themselves as part of an industry, with 32 percent working within the field for over 10 years and 45 percent staying with the same employer for at least two to five years.

Generally, domestic workers work 40 to 60 hours a week. Ninety percent report they receive no health insurance from their employers.

Sixty-seven percent of those surveyed were not paid for overtime hours worked. Only 13 percent are paid a living wage of \$13 or more an hour.

Eighteen percent make wages below the poverty line, ranging from the minimum wage of \$5.16 to \$8.97 per hour. Another 8 percent are paid less than the minimum wage. Twenty percent of those surveyed did not want to respond to the question of wages.

Along with low pay, many domestic workers endure humiliation and abuse at the hands of their employers.

In a radio interview with New York radio station WBAI, one DWU member shared bad memories about her first job in the United States. She worked for a couple who had one daughter and two dogs; one of the dogs had cancer. She was required to dress in a full white nurse's uniform and was forced to push the child and the sick dog in a double stroller through the streets of New York.

While her employers threw lavish birthdays parties for the dogs and chauffeured the animals by limousines, they paid this worker only \$271 every two weeks.

Many domestic workers reported in the DWU study that after working long hours, they could not afford to pay their own bills. Forty percent said that they could not pay their monthly phone bill, 37 percent said they were unable to pay rent or mortgage, and 21 percent reported they sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat.

Meeting with a state senator's aide in Albany May 23, one woman shared a story of a domestic worker whose employer went away on vacation for two weeks, leaving her two small children at home. The employer left no food in the house nor money for food for the children, forcing the domestic worker to use her own meager wages to provide for the children. The domestic worker saved receipts but her employer refused to reimburse her.

U.S. legacy of racism towards domestic workers

"I compare the domestic industry to the legacy of the slavery because if you remember times before, when the slaves were brought to this country, women were placed

in the house and men were placed to work in fields with the rest of the women. The women were physically, sexually and emotionally abused by the masters. And that still exists to this day. And that's why I am a member of DWU: because I see this as reparations [for] women's visible labor, not only in the United States but around the world," Joyce Campbell, a leader of DWU, told WBAI radio.

Historically, the labor and workers' movements have been successful in wrangling concessions in the form of laws to obtain protections and standards in the workplace. DWU's study outlines provisions in U.S. labor laws that exclude both farm and domestic workers from federal rights and protections.

"The NLRA [National Labor Relations Act] guarantees U.S. employees the right to organize, but specifically excludes domestic workers from its definition of 'employee.'

"The FLSA [Fair Labor Standards Act] sets a federal minimum wage rate, maximum hours, and overtime for employees in certain occupations. Until 1974, domestic workers were completely excluded, and today the Act still excludes from coverage 'casual' employees such as babysitters and 'companions' for the sick or elderly. Furthermore, live-in domestic workers, unlike most other employees in the U.S., cannot get overtime under FLSA.

"OSHA [Occupational Safety & Health Administration] regulations explicitly exclude domestic workers from the Act's protections '[a]s a matter of policy.'"

Even civil-rights laws have excluded domestic workers. The study reports that although Title VII prohibits discrimination on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin," this only applies only to employers with 15 or more employees. Thus, virtually every domestic worker in the United States is excluded from Title VII's protections.

The study also showed that because the industry's workplace is in private homes, physical, verbal and sexual abuse and other forms of degradation are rampant, with no way for workers to hold the employers accountable. One-third of domestic workers who face abuse identified race and immigration status as factors in the employers' actions.

Domestic workers are fighting back!

In Caribbean patois, "Tell Dem Slavery Done!" is the slogan on the front of a Domestic Workers United T-shirt. Next to the slogan is the image of a Black woman with her fist in the air. On the back of the shirt, in big block letters, is a multinational list of organizations—Asian, Latina, South Asian, Caribbean, and more intertwined with words of multinational solidarity.

"When I came here and started to work and saw the great divide in terms of women of color, Third World women, whether we be Asian, whether we be Trinidadian, or whether we be Mexican, we are all women of color. We're oppressed, we work long hours, we are afraid to speak up," says Joyce Campbell. "I always wanted to belong to

something that could radically change the way we are viewed on our jobs, the ways we are looked at and perceived. When I found DWU, I knew that there ain't no turning back for me. This is my struggle. This is my fight."

Founded in 2000, Domestic Workers United was initiated by the Women Workers Project of CAAAV-Organizing Asian Communities and Andolan Organizing South Asian Workers. Both are progressive grassroots groups based in New York. In the spring of 2000, domestic workers of each group began to reach out to workers throughout the industry.

Through a series of meetings, hundreds of domestic workers, predominantly from the Caribbean, came forward and DWU was founded. Affiliate organizations of DWU include Damayan Migrant Workers Association, Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, Unity Housecleaners, CAAAV-Organizing Asian Communities and Andolan Organizing South Asian Workers.

An important allied organization has been Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, which launched a Shalom Bayit: Justice for Domestic Workers campaign to reach out to Jewish employers of domestic workers. Close to 25 synagogues in Manhattan and Brooklyn have engaged in a process of education, outreach, fundraising and political action in solidarity with Domestic Workers United.

In 2003, the New York City Council passed the first bill in the country to expand protections for domestic workers by requiring employers to inform employees in writing about duties and wages. The current Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights (A2804) has been in the New York State Senate for one year, and in the House Assembly for two.

"While the Bush administration is trying to further criminalize immigrants and push forward his guest worker bill, here are immigrant women workers fighting for justice," says Ai-jen Poo, an organizer for DWU and a staff member of CAAAV. "The winning of the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights would mean a victory not just for domestic workers, but for all for workers fighting for a living wage and for dignity and respect on the job."

To support the passing of the Domestic Workers Bills of Rights (A2804), see www.domesticworkersunited.org ♣

Black labor & the fight for reparations

By Bill Doares
Workers World, Aug. 1, 2002

“Probably every slave imported represented, on the average, five corpses in Africa or on the high seas. The American slave trade meant, therefore, the elimination of 60 million Africans.”

—Armet Francis, *The Black Triangle*

“As valuable a family as was ever offered for sale, consisting of a cook about 35 years of age, and her daughter about 14, and son about 8. The whole will be sold together or a part of them, as may suit a purchaser.”

—Ad in *The Charleston (South Carolina) Courier*, April 12, 1828

The bones of enslaved Africans lie in unmarked graves on both sides of the Atlantic and beneath its gray waters. But the wealth slave labor created is not gone with the wind. It lives on as capital in the huge fortunes of “great” capitalist families—Rockefellers, Morgans, Mellons, DuPonts and others—who have invested it again and again. It is in the skyscrapers of Manhattan and New England’s Ivy League universities. It is in railroads, airlines, steel mills, auto plants, oilfields, hotels, dotcoms and telecoms. It lies in bank vaults beneath Wall Street and is traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

Those who “own” this wealth have power over those whose ancestors created it—and over working people in every country. When bankers “red line” a Black community, they exercise that power. So does a corporation when it shuts a plant in South Carolina or the South Bronx to seek still cheaper labor in Haiti or Mexico. It is on display when plant shutdowns devastate Black and other working-class communities. It is in action when the World Bank forces an African country to “open” its public sector to Western investors in order to eventually privatize it.

Profits from the slave trade “provided one of the main streams of capital accumulation in England that financed the Industrial Revolution,” wrote Eric Williams, the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Malachi Postlethwayt, an 18th-century slavery apologist, called the British Empire a “magnificent superstructure of American commerce and naval power built on an African foundation.” Britain’s North American colonies that rose on that foundation became the United States. Ports like Boston, New York City, Baltimore and Charleston were built on the “triangular trade” that brought enslaved Africans to Caribbean sugar plantations. The New York Stock Exchange now stands on what was once an auction block for slaves.

For much of the 19th century, cotton grown by slaves made up 60 to 80 percent of U.S. exports. Slave-grown tobacco and rice comprised much of the rest. Slave-grown cotton also fed New England’s textile mills, which gave birth to U.S. industrial production.

Liberated dock workers on the Union Quartermaster's Wharf at Alexandria, Virginia during the Civil War.



The wealth of many top U.S. corporations can be traced directly to slavery. Fleet-Boston Bank, once Providence Bank, was founded by Rhode Island slave merchant James Brown, who also endowed Brown University.

Yale and the University of Virginia are also among the universities endowed by slave merchants and slave owners. Yet in the United States today there are more Black men in prison than in college.

Slave owners who got rich in the cotton trade started Lehman Brothers investment bank. Alex Brown and Sons, which merged with the German giant Deutsche Bank in 1999, financed the cotton trade.

Brown Brothers Harriman made a fortune loaning plantation owners money to buy slaves. When the planters could not meet their debt, Brown seized and worked their assets, including the slaves. A one-time partner was Prescott Walker Bush, whose grandson lives in the slave-built White House, thanks to an electoral-college system created to give slave owners political power. Prescott Bush continued the firm's tradition by doing business with the Nazis.

The second-largest banking group in the United States is JPMorgan Chase. In 2001 it made \$15 billion in profits on assets of \$600 billion. Among the banks now merged into it are two that insured slave ships in the 1850s. JPMorgan Chase is now deep in financial scandal. It poured money into Enron, WorldCom and other fraudulent schemes. Have any of these banks been as generous putting money into Black communities?

The slave trade could not survive without insurance due to slave rebellions and escapes. Lloyds of London, the giant shipping broker, made a fortune insuring slave ships. U.S. insurance giants Aetna, New York Life and AIG acquired companies that insured slaves as "property." Today these same insurance firms are pushing doctors and employers to cut health costs while millions of African Americans are without health insurance.

Before the Civil War, "the backbone of the South's railway labor force of track repairmen, station helpers, brakemen, firemen and sometimes even engineers" was slaves, wrote University of Pennsylvania historian Walter Licht in "Working on the

Railroad." After emancipation, the rail bosses forced Black workers out of most of these jobs. It wasn't until the 1960s that Black railroad employment rose again.

Slaves, usually "rented" from their owners, built 94 rail lines in the Old South. Today Norfolk Southern, CSX, Union Pacific and Canadian National own these lines. The big railroad companies have eliminated nearly 800,000 jobs over the past four decades, striking hard at Black communities.

The Capitol was also built by slave labor. A freed Black architect designed much of Washington. George Washington, a wealthy slave owner, had the city built between Virginia and Maryland to take advantage of slave labor.

Today you will find many descendants of slave owners in the millionaires' club called the U.S. Senate, but you will not find a single descendant of slaves. And every occupant of the White House has been white and male. The majority of Washington's population is of African descent, however. To this day they are denied congressional representation.

Today these corporations still benefit from the legacy of slavery, lynch law and "Jim Crow." Witness the lucrative modern slavery of the prison-industrial complex, the lower average wages paid to Black workers and the union organizing drives broken by racist division.

Ever since 1865, when President Andrew Johnson revoked General William Tecumseh Sherman's Order 1815 that promised freed slave families 40 acres and a mule, the fight for reparations has been part of the Black freedom movement. In the 1890s, after bloody massacres overturned Reconstruction in the South, the Mutual Ex-Slaves Relief Bounty and Pension Association was formed to fight for it. Between 1890 and 1910 at least five bills for reparations were introduced in Congress.

This year Daedra Farmer-Paelman, whose research has uncovered many corporate ties to slavery, launched a class-action suit against Aetna Life Insurance, FleetBoston Bank and CSX Railroads on behalf of all the descendants of slaves.

Millions for Reparations, a coalition of Black activists, has called for a rally in Washington on Aug. 17, the anniversary of the birth of Black leader Marcus Garvey. A multinational group of labor activists has formed Labor for Reparations to support the rally.

Andre Powell is an executive board member of AFSCME Local 112 who attended the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, last August, where reparations gained worldwide attention. Powell told WW: "The fight to be paid for work performed is a basic trade union demand. But it goes beyond that. It exposes the fact that profits are nothing but unpaid labor and that idea terrifies Corporate America.

"Karl Marx said that 'capital is dead labor that lives anew by the hand of the living.' Corporate America owes its wealth and power over us to the dead labor of generations of Black people who were literally worked to death. The fight for reparations can turn this whole country around." ♣

Sources for this article include Daedra Farmer-Paelman, "Capitalism and Slavery" by Eric Williams and "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" by Walter Rodney.

The May Day uprising of 2006

By Larry Holmes

Workers World, May 9, 2006

The U.S. capitalist class—and anyone else who has sought to keep the working class in North America shackled to the ideology and the political parties of the ruling class and prevent it from developing class consciousness, militancy and solidarity with workers around the planet—has suffered a stunning defeat of epic proportions. To almost everyone's surprise, millions of immigrant workers, from Los Angeles to New York to Chicago and more than 100 other cities, left their jobs and schools to take to the streets, bringing back May Day—International Workers' Day—in a big way to the country of its origin.

Not only did immigrants reclaim May Day, a day that U.S. imperialists thought they had forever wiped out in this country, but these workers also pulled off the first truly national general strike—and what's more, a strike against the government over political demands as opposed to a strike directed at this or that employer in a particular industry over economic issues.

May Day 2006 is a wake-up call for all who consider themselves progressive, socialist or pro-socialist, whether they be in the labor unions, the anti-war movement or wherever. Those who did not participate in or support the May Day uprising especially need to reassess their inaction immediately.

May Day 2006 is a wake-up call for all those who once were, and perhaps still remain, a part of the good fight but had given up on the working class and the prospect



Immigration march in NYC, 2006.

Moorehead, Monica (Editor). Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle.

New York, NY, USA: World View Forum, 2007. p 91.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/iupui/Doc?id=10425268&ppg=202>

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of a qualitative and historic break coming from down below, in spite of the seemingly endless prevalence of bourgeois reactionary politics. It's time to reassess those doubts.

Perhaps most importantly, May Day 2006 is a clarion call to legions of new soldiers who are ready to join the class struggle on the workers' side.

Potential for unity

The "Sleeping Giant," as some have called the millions of workers who took to the streets on May Day in the U.S., is not only distinguished by the fact that many of these workers are undocumented. They are also the face of the working class in this country right now, and will be even more so in the future.

In every industry and in every part of the country, the working class is more often than not made up of workers in low-wage jobs, many of whom are recent immigrants, people of color and women. Many come from countries where May Day is a holiday and class consciousness is far ahead of what it is in the U.S. today.

Imperialist globalization—the impetus behind the large migration of workers—has re-introduced class struggle and militancy into the working class worldwide. At the same time that imperialism is globalizing super-exploitation, it's also globalizing working-class consciousness and militancy.

In many ways the composition of the New York City May 1 coalition exemplifies the extraordinary potential for uniting the various nationalities who make up the working class in the United States. The coalition meetings were held at Local 808 of the Teamsters, in Long Island City. This was made possible by Chris Silvera, who is the secretary treasurer of the local, regional co-director of the Million Worker March Movement, and chair of the Teamster National Black Caucus.

Usually present at the meetings were representatives of immigrant communities from Mexico, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Puerto Rico and other Central and South American countries, the Philippines, China, Pakistan, India, Senegal and countries of the Middle East, and, of special significance, Black trade unionists and activists.

Join them!

While the outpouring of immigrant workers was spontaneous in nature, it was not without organization. While the larger U.S. labor unions have not been able to, or not tried to, organize immigrants, workers from Central and South America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and the Middle East have organized themselves into workers' associations. This new network is active in every region of the country, doing everything from providing food and legal assistance to workers and their families, to fighting for basic workers' rights in sweatshops of all sizes.

The biggest lesson for the tens of millions of workers in the U.S. who are being ordered from on high to fear and fight immigrant workers is, "Don't fight and fear your immigrant sisters and brothers—join them and take a lesson from them!"



May Day march in Paris, 2006.

Just imagine if 3 or 4 million workers from all nationalities had joined with immigrant workers on May Day to press demands for all workers. What if the idea of a workers' boycott or general strike caught on in other sectors of the working class? Just think: a general strike to end the war and/or to demand health insurance for all!

While it is still too early to say for sure that the immigrant worker movement has defeated the most repressive features of the anti-immigrant legislation known as HR4437—particularly the section of the bill that would have made it a felony to be in the country without documents—clearly, at least for the moment, the momentum behind that bill has been pushed back.

There's a lesson in this for everyone who still thinks that they have no choice but to support the lesser-of-two-evils candidate of a capitalist political party. Millions of workers—most of whom have not voted for either big-business party and many of whom are not able to vote even if they wanted to—were able to push back repression through mass action, as opposed to waiting for the elections in order to place their hopes on the Democratic Party.

Political divide

Can the upsurge of immigrant workers spread to all workers? Yes it can, if there is leadership and direction. At the earliest possible time a national framework for a united workers' struggle should be created with a program of demands that concretely unites the struggle of immigrant workers for full legalization with the struggle for justice for the survivors of Katrina, the fight for higher wages for all workers, health care and pensions, the right to a job, the right to a union, and opposition to the new wave of mass layoffs and plant closings that so many workers are facing.

But before such a plan for programmatic and organizational unity can be fully launched, the undocumented workers and their demands need to be supported.

The May Day uprising is first and foremost a rebellion against racist legislation that would criminalize undocumented workers and their supporters. Beyond this, it is a struggle to win full legal rights for the undocumented.

The immigrant rights movement is split over what course the movement should take.

On one side of the divide are those who support legislation that combines granting legal status to some undocumented workers with the institution of new "guest worker" programs, and more money and measures to repress the undocumented.

The more militant forces in this struggle are fighting for full legalization and full workers' rights for all the undocumented.

Those organizations and leaders that support compromise legislation are generally inclined to lead the struggle into a Democratic Party electoral course. The more militant, struggle-oriented forces are the ones who called for May Day and the general strike and are looking to build a mass mobilization in Washington this fall.

This political divide over demands and direction is a natural and inevitable part of the struggle.

Those who believe that the greater potential for this struggle to win immediate demands, as well as open new potential for a wider class struggle, lies with the leadership of the militants, stand closer to those political forces. Nonetheless, the main responsibility for those who are in solidarity with the struggle of the immigrants is to do everything within their power to insure that the immigrant workers' struggle is not isolated, but instead wins the support of broader and broader sections of the progressive and workers' movement.

Build multinational alliance

In this regard, at this moment, nothing could be more important than the solidarity between the Black movement and the immigrant rights movement. The solidarity of Black labor unionists with May Day in New York City was both concrete and decisive. After more moderate forces in the immigrant rights struggle declined support for the May Day boycott, it was Black labor unionists in the Million Worker March movement who made sure that the May 1 coalition had labor support.

The ruling class knows that if Black and Latin@ forces began to join and, for example, link the struggle for immigrant rights and the struggle to rebuild New Orleans for the people who have been victimized and displaced, then it will really have a big problem. In order to undermine the prospect of Black and Brown unity, bourgeois media mouthpieces have gone out of their way to draw attention to and exacerbate divisions. The efforts to sabotage the natural unity between Black and Brown must not, and will not, succeed.

In his excellent piece entitled "Build the Black and Brown Alliance for Justice and Human Rights," Saladin Muhammad of Black Workers for Justice points out, "The struggle against the U.S. system of oppression is not a competition between the oppressed to declare themselves as the leaders of the struggle. The initiative from any

sector of the oppressed must be seen as an opening for all of the oppressed to come forward and intensify their struggles.

"Yes, there must be recognition that these are two independent movements with their own demands and leaderships. However, there must also be a conscious effort to develop an understanding and practical work to build the political and strategic links and interdependence of these movements as a force for progressive social change throughout the U.S. and for global justice. Workers and oppressed peoples throughout the world have been desperately hoping for such a powerful interconnecting movement to develop inside of the U.S."

Of course, the solidarity must go beyond Black and Brown, and all progressive forces have a lot of work to do because we are way behind. Nothing illustrates the magnitude of this problem more than a snapshot of two mass demonstrations in New York City, separated by 48 hours.

On April 29, hundreds of thousands marched two miles down Broadway from Union Square to Foley Square against the war. On May 1, upwards of half a million people marched the same route.

Both marches were anti-war, pro-immigrant workers' rights. But the social composition of the two marches was as different as night and day. The April 29 march was overwhelmingly white. The May Day march was probably 99 percent people of color, predominantly Latin@ workers, with significant contingents of workers of Asian and African descent.

If pressed to guess how many from the April 29 march attended the May 1 mobilization, the answer would probably be such a small percentage that it was hardly noticeable. Yet if only half, or even one-third, of the April 29 marchers had demonstrated again on May Day, it would have sent a signal that all efforts to turn people against immigrant workers on the basis of race, social and legal status were doomed to fail.

The same problem is evident in the minimal participation of anti-war protesters at the various local and national demonstrations in solidarity with the survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

Racism fragments working class

The biggest obstacle to forging a truly multinational working-class movement that can move in a revolutionary direction is not the might of the Pentagon, but the racial fragmentation in every part of society in this country, including the progressive movement.

This fragmentation goes deeper in this country than in other parts of the world.

The U.S. ruling class loves for the world to consider this country the land of opportunity and the apex of modernity, scientific, social and cultural superiority. But the U.S. really is the center of decaying imperialism, racism, classism, sexism, homophobia and every other kind of reactionary social division that capitalism spawns. Inequality is celebrated here, and the poor are demonized. This country is the citadel of

bourgeois and petty-bourgeois privilege, prejudice and arrogance, and the dominion of wealthy white men.

The long period that reactionary politics and policies have dominated the scene in this country, coupled with the absence of a generalized and sustained struggle coming from the working class, has made the fragmentation in the U.S. even deeper.

One must understand the effects of all this, even on attitudes and behavior within the progressive movement, in order to understand and to fight the conservatism, opportunism and non-struggle traditions that have corrupted much of the leadership of the labor unions and to one extent or another the forces that guide most of the progressive movements.

The good news is that the fragmentation is not impossible to overcome. But it will take a ceaseless, determined, iron-willed struggle on the part of those who are ready to break down old barriers of behavior and prejudice and nurture a tradition—new for many—of solidarity in the struggle against all forms of oppression.

Need for a revolutionary party

Understanding the utter necessity of solidarity for the struggle to move forward, and knowing the hard work and patience, the revolutionary principles, sensitivity, political maturity and experience that will be required for this job should put the appreciation of the need for a revolutionary party in a whole new light.

Without a serious, thoughtful and disciplined revolutionary party to assist in the development of the class struggle—especially where the unity between nationalities is a decisive component—the struggle will fall short and ultimately not be able to progress.

The task of building a genuine multinational working-class party that is capable of helping to guide and synthesize the day-to-day struggle for the immediate needs and demands of workers with the struggle against imperialism and for socialism is not determined by which group shouts socialism the loudest or proclaims most adamantly that it is the answer.

The struggle to build such a party will be a long and difficult one, especially in this country, but it is a necessity that cannot be put off by serious people.

A prerequisite for those who are building the party is an understanding that the movement must return to the socialist road. The most consistent and revolutionary socialists, along with workers and oppressed of the world who have yet to read the first page of the Communist Manifesto, may not know everything. But they do know that the state of the world today and all that can be learned from history makes it more apparent that society cannot advance further in any meaningful way—and will instead be subject to even greater inequality, violence, reaction, instability, war and worse—until imperialism has been replaced with world socialism.

As long as the working-class organizations, and those who are trying to fight in the interests of the working class, are limited in consciousness and action to accommodating

to the notion that the rule of imperialism and capitalism is unshakable, unalterable and permanent, they will find at some point that they can't pursue the struggle any further.

Guiding the movement in the U.S. back to the socialist road has already received some help from abroad. Indeed, the awakening of the Latin@ immigrant workers here is connected to the revival of militant struggle against U.S. imperialist rule in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Moreover, the revival of the struggle in Latin America—centered in Venezuela and Bolivia, as well as other places and with more rebellions to come—has come back on an advanced, avowedly pro-socialist basis. This alone has worldwide repercussions. It amounts to the first triumph of socialist over bourgeois ideology and reaction since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In a way, the revival of May Day in the U.S. is part of the early fruit of this phenomenon.

But we in the U.S. cannot depend on our revolution, our struggle and our party as a gift from fellow comrades and freedom fighters abroad. It is those on the front lines of the struggle against imperialism—from Palestine, to Iraq and Iran, Haiti, Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia—who are depending on solidarity emanating from the development of the anti-imperialist, anti-war, working-class struggle here at the center of imperialism to help them break free of the empire.

Build a Workers World!

This brings us right back to the question of the revolutionary party. How activists view those who are working to build such a party, and whether or not they join in this endeavor, will no doubt be based on the history of how those revolutionaries conduct themselves in the course of the struggle.

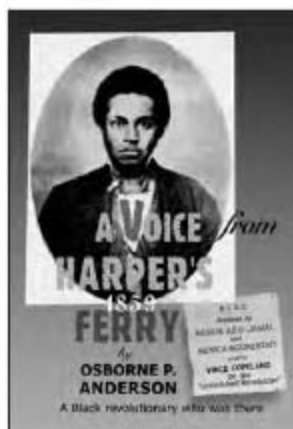
This is particularly true regarding how those trying to build the party conduct their relationships with important allies, especially amongst oppressed nationalities, and a million other variables both large and small, but all important.

Some good revolutionaries will wait to join such a party. Some will be ready to join now.

We in Workers World Party urge all who are ready to make the commitment and join now.

The more who join sooner, rather than later, the more likely it is that the struggle of immigrant workers—of all workers—and the struggle for a world free of imperialism will reap the benefits of a stronger party dedicated to their interests.

With this in mind, Workers World Party announces the opening of a recruitment drive as an integral part of the preparation to take the struggles that have already begun to a higher level and pave the way for newer and greater ones. ♣

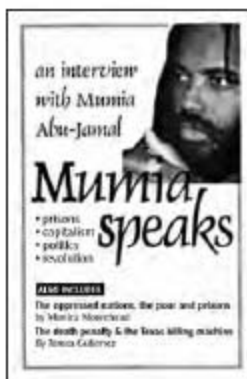


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— **Andre Powell**, *co-convenor, Labor for Reparations*

"Other races or people have received reparations for crimes committed against them, such as Japanese people and Jewish people. Slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade were crimes against humanity. Reparations for African Americans are long overdue. The issue of reparations has always led me to think more and more about my right to 'forty acres and a mule.' When people in the Black community read this book they will be motivated to fight back."

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